Paradise Lost

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN MILTON

Milton was the son of a Protestant composer who provided him with an excellent education. Milton became proficient in several languages and graduated from Cambridge in 1632. He then travelled around Europe, where he studied and wrote poems, including the pastoral poem *Lycidas*. He returned to England and married the sixteen-year-old Mary Powell, but the marriage was unhappy and Milton began developing radical ideas about divorce. Mary Powell eventually died in childbirth, as did Milton's second wife, Katherine Woodcock, and then Milton married Elizabeth Mynshull. Overall he had four children, all by Mary Powell. When the English Civil War broke out in 1642, Milton supported Oliver Cromwell and wrote in defense of the regicide of Charles I. After the monarchy was restored, Milton went into hiding and composed *Paradise Lost*, his most famous work. He was completely blind by then, and dictated the poem to his daughter. Milton was eventually pardoned by the monarchy and lived the rest of his life peacefully, dying of kidney failure at 65.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Milton was a radical Protestant Christian opposed to Catholicism and the Anglican Church that held power in England at the time. He also defended republicanism and was anti-monarchy, and so supported Oliver Cromwell when he overthrew Charles I of the Stuart dynasty. Cromwell then set up the Commonwealth of England and ruled as "Lord Protector" for many years. Charles II restored the monarchy in 1660, and Milton was forced into hiding because of his defense of Cromwell and the regicide of Charles I. *Paradise Lost* takes place in a mythic, prehistoric past, but Milton still filled it with allusions to the politics of present-day England.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Paradise Lost contains hundreds of allusions, but its most significant influence is the Bible, as its plot is mostly based on the first chapters of Genesis. Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad* and Virgil's *Aeneid* are Paradise Lost's precursors in the genre of epic poetry, though they were written centuries before. Shakespeare was the greatest English writer of the generation before Milton, and their works are often compared. Milton's republican political philosophy was influenced by Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *Paradise Lost*
- **When Written:** 1658-1663
- **Where Written:** London, England
- **When Published:** First edition in 1667, revised second edition in 1674
- **Literary Period:** Late English Renaissance Literature, English Restoration Literature
- **Genre:** Epic Poetry, Christian Mythology
- **Setting:** Heaven, Hell, and Paradise
- **Climax:** Eve eats the forbidden fruit
- **Point of View:** Third person omniscient

EXTRA CREDIT

Mocked at Cambridge. Though already a brilliant poet in his school days, Milton was mocked by his peers at Cambridge because of his long hair and effeminate manner, and his nickname was the "Lady of Christ's."

Rhyme. One of the most revolutionary aspects of *Paradise Lost* was its lack of rhyme, as regular rhyme was the norm in poetry of the time. In the second edition Milton even had to include an explanation of "why the poem rhymes not."

PLOT SUMMARY

Milton invokes a Heavenly Muse to help him describe the "Fall of Man." The action begins with Satan and his devils in Hell after they have been defeated by God's army. The devils construct Pandaemonium, a meeting place, and discuss how they will continue their revolt against God. Beelzebub suggests they corrupt God's new creation, Earth, and Satan agrees. Satan offers to cross the abyss and find Earth alone. As he leaves Hell he meets his children, Sin and Death, who follow him and build a bridge from Hell to Earth.

God predicts that Satan will corrupt humans, and the Son offers to sacrifice himself for humanity's sake. Satan travels past Chaos and Night and finds Earth. He pretends to be a cherub and sneaks past the angelic guard. Satan enters Paradise and its beauty causes him painful envy, but he resolves to bring evil out of God's goodness. Satan sees Adam and Eve, the first humans, and overhears them discussing God's commandment forbidding them from eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge.

That night Adam and Eve have innocent sex and fall asleep, and Satan turns into a toad whispering to Eve. The Archangel Gabriel finds Satan and confronts him. Satan considers fighting but then God hangs Golden Scales in the sky and Satan flees.

Eve wakes up from a dream about disobedience. To ensure the couple's free will, God sends the angel Raphael to warn Adam and Eve about Satan.

Raphael eats with Adam and Eve and then describes Satan's war in Heaven. Satan was jealous of God's Son, and he convinced a third of the angels to rebel with him. Only one angel, Abdiel, left his cause and returned to God. The angel armies fought, with Michael leading Heaven's army. The rebels experienced pain but couldn't be killed. On the second day the rebels fired cannons at the good angels, but then the Son drove them out of Heaven and into Hell. Raphael warns Adam about Satan's attempts to corrupt him.

Raphael tells the story of creation: the Son created light, then the stars and planets, and then the animals and humans. Adam asks Raphael more about the cosmos, but Raphael warns him about seeking too much knowledge. Adam tells Raphael his first memories and admits his physical attraction to Eve, and then Raphael returns to Heaven.

After seven days Satan returns to Eden and possesses a serpent. Meanwhile Eve suggests that she and Adam work separately. Adam resists this idea but relents. Satan finds Eve and flatters her. She asks how he learned to speak, and Satan says he ate the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. He suggests that Eve should eat the fruit to prove her courage and to become a goddess, and Eve hesitates but then eats. She offers some to Adam, who realizes Eve has fallen, but he eats the fruit so they won't be separated. The two experience lust for the first time and have sex.

God sends the Son to punish the couple. The Son punishes the serpent to slither on the ground, Eve to have pain in childbirth and submit to her husband, and Adam to labor for his food. Meanwhile Satan returns to Hell and sends Sin and Death to infect Earth. Satan and the devils are punished by being turned into serpents.

After the Fall, the angels rearrange the earth to make it less hospitable, and the animals become carnivorous and unfriendly. Adam and Eve blame each other and fight, and then Eve accepts the blame and considers suicide. Adam suggests they have revenge on Satan by being obedient to God, and they both weep and repent.

God sends Michael to expel the couple from Paradise. Before he does so Michael shows Adam a vision of the future, including his children's crimes and many sinful generations, and then the flood, when God kills all humans except Noah's family. He sees the Tower of Babel, the creation of Israel, the Exodus from Egypt, and finally Jesus as the Son incarnate. Michael explains the Son's sacrifice to atone for the Fall and save humanity. Adam is comforted, and then he and Eve tearfully leave Eden.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Satan – God's greatest enemy and the ruler of Hell. Satan (his original name is erased; "Satan" means "Adversary") was one of the most powerful Archangels, but then became jealous of God and convinced a third of God's angels to rebel with him. Satan is cast into Hell, which he proudly rules until he realizes Hell is inside his soul and he can never escape suffering. He resolves to corrupt whatever he can of God's goodness, and flies to Earth to tempt Adam and Eve. Satan is meant to be the antagonist of the poem, but he is also the most dynamic, interesting character.

God the Father – The ruler and creator of the universe, the traditional Christian God without the third person of the Trinity (the Holy Spirit). God is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-good, but he demands total obedience from his creatures. While God allows angels and humans to have free will, he also is eternal, existing outside of time, and so foresees all future events. Therefore even Satan's rebellion and the Fall of Man fit into God's overarching plan, which brings good out of evil.

God the Son – The second person of the Trinity, equal to God and of the same essence, but a different person. In the traditional Christian Trinity the Son is eternally "begotten" of the Father, but in Milton's cosmos the Father begets the Son at a specific point and then elevates him to divinity. The Son is more active than the Father in *Paradise Lost*, creating the Earth, volunteering to die for humanity's sake, and entering Eden to punish Adam and Eve. The Son later becomes incarnate as Jesus, who dies and rises from the dead, defeating Death and Satan. The Son will then return to join Heaven and Earth into one Paradise.

Adam – The first human and the father of mankind. Adam is created as perfect – beautiful, innocent, and wise – but even in his unfallen state he is eager for forbidden knowledge and attracted by Eve's physical beauty. Milton saw men as inherently superior to women, so Adam is greater than Eve in wisdom, strength, and closeness to God.

Eve – The first woman, Eve is created out of Adam's rib. She is slightly inferior to him and must "submit" to his will. As soon as she is created Eve shows a fascination with her own beauty, gazing at her reflection. Eve is the first to be tempted by Satan and the first to eat the fruit that causes the Fall.

Sin – Satan's daughter who sprang from his head when he first conceived of disobedience, and then Satan incestuously impregnated her. When she is cast into Hell, Sin becomes a monster with the lower half of a serpent and a circle of hell-hounds around her waist, constantly gnawing at her. God gives her the keys to Hell, but she immediately gives them to Satan. She gives birth to Death and then enters Earth after the Fall, infecting all humans with sin.

Death – A black, terrifying figure with an insatiable hunger. Death is the product of Satan and Sin's incestuous union, and after his birth he immediately pursues his mother and rapes her, fathering the dogs that torment her. Death enters Earth after the Fall and causes all life to succumb to him.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Michael – The greatest Archangel and leader of Heaven's army. Michael later enters Eden to expel Adam and Eve from Paradise and show Adam visions of the future.

Gabriel – The second-in-command of Heaven's army, Gabriel guards the staircase from Heaven to Earth. He enters Eden and confronts Satan, who flees.

Uriel – A far-seeing angel who guards Eden but is tricked by Satan disguised as a cherub, allowing Satan to enter Eden.

Raphael – An angel whom God sends to warn Adam and Eve about Satan. Raphael eats with the couple and then talks to Adam, explaining Satan's war, the creation of Earth, and love.

Abdiel – The only angel among Satan's legions to return to God's side, despite the scorn of the other rebels.

Beelzebub – Satan's second-in-command, a powerful devil.

Moloch – A violent devil who will later become a god demanding human sacrifice.

Belial – A well-spoken devil who advocates for sloth.

Mammon – A greedy devil who loves riches. Even in Heaven Mammon was always crouched over, staring at the golden roads.

Mulciber – An architect devil who designs Pandaemonium and is associated with the Greek god Hephaestus.

Chaos – The raw, "dark materials" out of which God creates everything, but also an embodiment of these, a figure who desires disorder.

Night – Chaos's consort, also part of the abyss surrounding God's creation.

The Muse (Urania) – The figure of divine inspiration that Milton invokes to help him write the poem. The Muse is associated with Urania, the Greek Muse of astronomy, but also with the Holy Spirit.

Ithuriel – An angel under Gabriel's command who finds Satan in the form of a toad.

Zephon – The other angel who finds Satan and brings him before Gabriel.

The Holy Spirit – The third person of the Trinity in Christian theology, but in Milton's poem only referenced as his Muse and the "Comforter" who will help Christians after Jesus is gone.

Cain and Abel – Adam and Eve's first children. Cain kills Abel out of jealousy.

Enoch – The only righteous man in the early sinful world. God snatches him up to Heaven before he dies.

Noah – The only righteous man of a later generation, who builds an ark and then "restarts" the human race after God destroys the Earth with a flood.

Nimrod – A tyrant who tries to build the Tower of Babel.

Abraham – A righteous man who leaves his idolatrous parents and goes to Canaan. The patriarch of Israel.

Pharaoh – The Egyptian ruler who enslaves the Israelites.

Moses – A righteous Israelite who frees his people from Egypt and accepts the Ten Commandments.

Joshua – Moses's successor who leads the Israelites into the Promised Land, the symbolic precursor of Jesus.

David – A great Israelite king and ancestor of Jesus.

Mary – The virgin mother of Jesus, the "second Eve" who undoes Eve's original sin.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

HIERARCHY AND ORDER

In portraying the "Fall of Man" and the war in Heaven, Milton spends much of *Paradise Lost* describing the universal hierarchy and order that these events upset. In his 17th century view of the cosmos, Heaven exists above, Earth below, and Hell and Chaos below that. Within this geographically ordered cosmos, the most important hierarchy of Heaven is that of God as supreme monarch, the creator and ruler of the universe, and his "only begotten" Son as equal in rank, a separate person but of the same essence as God. Below these are the Archangels and Angels, arranged in different categories depending on their proximity to God's light – these include Thrones, Powers, Dominions, and Cherubim, among others. When God creates Earth, he sets Adam and Eve in rank above the animals, and he sets Adam above Eve in terms of authority and wisdom. The devils of Hell are the lowest ranked of all, as they have been totally cast away from God.

In his personal life, Milton was a proponent of individual freedom and the overthrow of monarchies, and he actively defended the regicide (i.e. execution) of King Charles I. One of the great ironies of *Paradise Lost* is that the radical Milton would make his masterpiece a poem that defends the ultimate system of monarchy and order. A probable explanation for this

(from C.S. Lewis) is that Milton felt God was the rightful ruler of all, while monarchs were not. Thus he felt no qualms about defending God's sovereignty while simultaneously attacking Charles I and II. Despite Milton's personal beliefs and biography, the overarching moral lesson of *Paradise Lost* is that the hierarchy of Heaven and Earth must be respected and upheld, and that the evil in the world is the result of an upset of the divine order.

DISOBEDIENCE AND REVOLT

Paradise Lost is about the fall of humanity and the rebellion of Satan and his angels, so the plot and conflict almost entirely come from acts of revolt against the hierarchy of God's universe. The "Fall" comes when Satan grows jealous of God honoring the Son so highly. Satan then convinces a third of Heaven's angels to rebel with him, claiming that they should be honored as gods and not have to worship God and his Son. This leads to a civil war in Heaven, with the rebels eventually being defeated and cast into Hell. In his bitterness Satan plots to corrupt humanity, who are then innocent, and in this second rebellion he uses fraud and disobedience instead of open revolt. The central conflict and subject of the poem then becomes Adam and Eve disobeying God by eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, which God had forbidden. This single act of disobedience leads to the "Fall of Man," and the Christian explanation for all the suffering and evil in the world.

In Milton's universe there is no question about punishment for disobedience and revolt. Even though God shows mercy in sending his Son to redeem humanity and bring good out of the Fall, he still causes endless misery for the sake of one piece of fruit, and he shows no mercy at all in punishing Satan. The order of the universe and God's supremacy must be maintained, and when this hierarchy is upset the result is always pain and punishment.

SIN AND INNOCENCE

Paradise Lost is basically a dramatization of the "original sin," the explanation of how evil entered a world that began as God's perfect creation. For a Christian like Milton, sin is everything that breaks God's laws, including acts that do harm to other humans and acts that upset the hierarchy of the universe. God's Heaven of good Angels and the original Paradise are both innocent places, free from any sin and unhappiness, and Milton tries to describe this pure innocence (though he is using "fallen language") in terms of natural joy, worship of God, and even a kind of blissful ignorance – as Adam doesn't know what death is except that it is bad, and Raphael warns Adam about wondering too much about the cosmos. The original sin of Adam and Eve is then the ultimate fall from innocence, as their act introduces sin into the world, along with a host of other evils like some animals becoming carnivores. The forbidden Tree gives Adam and Eve knowledge, but along with knowledge of evil it also brings evil itself, and the single disobedient act spirals quickly into lust, anger, and pride. At the end of the poem Michael shows Adam visions of the future, in which there seems no innocence left at all, as brothers murder brothers, disease and suffering rule, and people worship false gods. The only hope for the future is the coming of God's Son (Jesus), who will eventually break the power of evil and save those who accept him. God cannot restore the ignorant, pre-Fall innocence of Eden after sin has entered the world, but he can draw goodness out of the knowledge and experience of sin, which creates the hope and optimism at the poem's end.

FREE WILL AND PREDESTINATION

In *Paradise Lost* Milton argues that though God foresaw the Fall of Man, he still didn't influence Adam and Eve's free will. Milton's God exists outside of time and so sees all times at once, and thus can see the future without actively affecting it. God specifically says that he gives his creatures the option to serve or disobey, as he wants obedience that is freely given, not forced. Some critics have claimed that the God of the poem undercuts his own arguments, however. Milton did not believe in the Calvinistic idea of "predestination" (that God has already decided who is going to Hell and who to Heaven), but he often comes close to describing a Calvinistic God. God purposefully lets Satan escape Hell and sneak past Uriel into Eden, and basically orchestrates the whole situation so that humanity can be easily ruined by a single disobedient act. In describing the Fall before it happens, God already predicts how he will remedy it and give greater glory to himself by sending his Son to die and restore the order of Heaven.

This possible predestination leads to the theory of the "fortunate fall," which is based on Adam's delight at learning of the eventual coming of the Messiah. This idea says that God allowed the Fall of Man so that he could bring good out of it, possibly more good than would have occurred without the Fall, and be able to show his love and power through the incarnation of his Son. In this way the free will of Adam and Eve (and Satan) remains basically free, but still fits into God's overarching plan.

LOVE AND MARRIAGE

Love is one of the Christian God's most important attributes, and Heavenly love also takes center stage early in the poem as the angels ceaselessly worship God and commune with each other in joy, and the Son offers himself as a sacrifice for humankind out of love for them. Then when Adam and Eve are created, the poem partly shifts its focus to mortal love and the idea of marriage.

Milton was seen as radical and lewd for suggesting that Adam

and Eve had sex before the Fall and still remained sinless, but Milton creates a picture of marital love that is innocent and pure and still involves sexuality, mostly as a form of obedience to God's command to "be fruitful." Milton also emphasizes the hierarchy in marriage, which relates to the general ideas about women at the time. Adam is created to be superior to Eve, communing with God directly, while she communes with God through him, and while Eve is more beautiful, Adam is wiser and stronger. Along with this marital hierarchy, there is also a proper order for love itself. Love of God should come before romantic love (or self-love, in Satan's case), so when Adam chooses to disobey God's commandment for the sake of Eve's love, this is as much his "original sin" as the actual eating of the forbidden fruit. Though this romantic love leads to the Fall, it is also a great comfort to the couple (along with the ever-present love of God) as they are expelled from Paradise. Adam and Eve can still take some joy in each other, and look forward to the day when God will prove his divine love through his Son's incarnation.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in blue text throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

THE FRUIT OF THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE

One of the most famous symbols in history, the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge is the only fruit that God forbids Adam and Eve to eat of all the trees in Eden. The fruit is delicious-looking and aromatic, but Adam and Eve have no trouble resisting it until Satan tricks Eve into eating the fruit, as she hopes to gain knowledge and value. In itself the fruit gives knowledge of good and evil, which Adam and Eve lack in their innocent ignorance, but the importance of the fruit is that they eat it *despite* God's commandment. The knowledge the Tree gives is not inherently sinful, but disobeying God by eating of the Tree is sinful. The fruit that Eve and Adam eat then becomes the ultimate symbol – a single small thing that represents the cause of all the evil and suffering in the world.

THE SCALES IN THE SKY

When Satan is discovered in Paradise and confronted by Gabriel, God causes a pair of golden scales to appear in the sky, the scales on which God weighs the outcomes of every event. On one side of the scales is Satan running away, and on the other side is the result of him staying and fighting. This second side flies up, showing its emptiness and worthlessness. Satan accepts the inevitable truth of this outcome and chooses to run away. The scales represent God's supreme power over both his Angels and the rebellious devils, as he exists outside of time and knows all possible futures. Satan had once thought himself as powerful as God, but after his defeat he realizes there is no way to overthrow the omnipotent God. Satan is then forced to resort to fraud and trickery instead of open revolt, and even then he only acts as God allows him to – he accepts the power of God's "scales," and merely tries to cause as much pain as he can with his allotted power.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Penguin Classics edition of *Paradise Lost* published in 2003.

Book 1 Quotes

Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater man
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
Sing Heav'nly Muse...
What in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support;
That to the heighth of this great argument
I may assert Eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to men.

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 1.1.26

Explanation and Analysis

In this famous opening passage, John Milton maps out his project in *Paradise Lost*. Milton aims to accomplish a great deal: he's going to write a great epic poem about the original human story (according to Christianity), the story of how Adam and Eve fell from grace and paved the way for all of human suffering.

There's a lot to unpack here--scholars have written whole books about these first few lines. Notice the word "fruit" in the first line--a punning allusion to the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, which will eventually bring down Adam and Eve. Note, too, that Milton keeps on speaking about his relationship with a Heavenly Muse. Like Homer, the original epic poet, Milton describes himself as the passive transmitter of an age-old story: he's using his imagination

and creativity to describe the Biblical story, but he remains (mostly) loyal to the Bible itself. Milton's project is at once incredibly humble and incredibly ambitious: he humbly acknowledges his dependence on a muse (in Homer's case a goddess, but for Milton something like the Holy Spirit) for inspiration, and yet also claims that his poem will accomplish a great feat, describing the ultimate "epic," and justifying the ways of God to mankind. Milton, as we'll see, will try to use his poem to explain the great moral mystery of the Biblical book of Genesis: how Adam and Eve could be said to *deserve* their punishment when it was God himself who created them.

Fall'n Cherub, to be weak is miserable
Doing or suffering: but of this be sure,
To do aught good never will be our task,
But ever to do ill our sole delight,
As being the contrary to his high will
Whom we resist. If then his Providence
Out of our evil seek to bring forth good,
Our labour must be to pervert that end,
And out of good still to find means of evil...

Related Characters: Satan (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 1.157-165

Explanation and Analysis

Critics have often noted the irony of Milton's poem: although he's writing about God and the fall of man, the most fascinating character in the book isn't a man at all; it's Satan. In this passage, Milton shows Satan's fall from Heaven--cast out by God for rebellion, Satan writhes in agony in Hell. Satan tells his loyal follower, Beelzebub, that they must find hope: even if they've been punished for their acts of evil against God, they must spend their time doing evil and undermining the work of God.

A natural question, then, is how can Satan hope to undermine the authority of almighty, omnipotent God? Satan seems not to know himself--he's so new to the world of evil that he's working it out as he goes. In a way, Satan's ambition to overcome his odds and do evil is oddly inspiring, and Milton actually seems to build sympathy for Satan by narrating the story from his point of view. Some have argued that Milton is trying to "tempt" readers to sympathize with Satan, while others have argued that Milton actually (subconsciously) sympathizes with Satan himself.

The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n...
Here we may reign secure, and in my choice
To reign is worth ambition though in Hell:
Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heav'n.

Related Characters: Satan (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 1.254-263

Explanation and Analysis

In this famous passage, Satan claims that he would rather be free and independent of God's authority, even if it means living in Hell, than serve God mindlessly and be rewarded with Heaven. In other words, Satan aspires to be "his own boss"--he wants to rule over his henchmen the devils, essentially being the "god" of Hell. His argument here is that the devils can turn Hell into their own Heaven, as long as they remain free in their minds. This also foreshadows Satan's later realization that "Hell" is not a place at all--it's something he carries within himself. So far from being able to turn Hell into Heaven, he can in fact never escape Hell, no matter where he goes. But at this point in the poem he remains more optimistic.

While Satan's statement seems bitter, petty, and manipulative, on another level it's also somewhat inspiring--the way he talks about using his mind and his imagination to achieve happiness is, one could argue, deeply human. Satan is a kind of Romantic hero--a bold, imaginative, yet evil figure who aspires to cause pain and suffering to everyone rather than submit his pride to another's.

Book 2 Quotes

Thus Beelzebub
Pleaded his devilish counsel, first devised
By Satan, and in part proposed; for whence,
But from the author of all ill could spring
So deep a malice, to confound the race
Of mankind in one root, and earth with Hell
To mingle and involve, done all to spite
The great Creator? But their spite still serves
His glory to augment.

Related Characters: Satan, God the Father, Beelzebub

Related Themes:

Page Number: 2.379-386

Explanation and Analysis

Satan has assembled a vast group of devils, his henchmen (who were cast out of Heaven along with him). Satan has held the council to decide what to do now that their open revolt against God has failed, and everyone is confined to Hell. After a series of speakers come forward, Beelzebub takes the floor, proposing that the devils work their mischief on God's new creations, the human race.

Notice that Satan has actually *planted* Beelzebub to propose such an idea--the whole "debate" is just a farce, allowing the other devils to think that they have a democratic voice. (In this devilish council Milton also critiques the human politics of his time). Beelzebub is trying to persuade his fellow devils to go along with Satan's plan: to use fraud, instead of open rebellion, to try to hurt God--and to do this by corrupting mankind, God's favored new creation. And while we know the result of this plan of "deep malice," Milton also notes the bright side: all of Satan's mischief will be in vain. One day, God will send Jesus Christ to redeem mankind, saving the human race from damnation in Hell. It is characteristic of the Christian universe that evil, while horrific by itself, is actually *useful* for achieving good ends. Milton will show how Satan's rebellious evil actually helps God and ensures God's plan.

> If him by force he can destroy, or worse,
> By some false guile pervert; and shall pervert;
> For man will hearken to his glozing lies,
> And easily transgress the sole command,
> Sole pledge of his obedience: so will fall
> He and his faithless progeny: whose fault?
> Whose but his own? Ingrate, he had of me
> All he could have; I made him just and right,
> Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall.

Related Characters: God the Father (speaker), Satan, Adam

Related Themes:

Page Number: 2.91-99

Explanation and Analysis

In this Book, we transition from Hell to Heaven, and the contrast couldn't be clearer. God wields effortless authority over his angel followers, the setting is filled with light and music, and everything is also a little bit less interesting. Here, the angels ask God what will happen when the devils try to corrupt mankind. To everyone's surprise, God says that Satan will succeed: he will tempt Adam and Eve to disobey God.

The big question here is, why isn't God himself responsible for mankind's fall? If God is all-powerful and created the human race, and foresaw their fall, then isn't he liable for the corruption of his own creations? God responds that he created mankind with the gift of free will: mankind is "sufficient to have stood yet free to fall." Therefore, God isn't directly responsible for humans' decisions--he allows them to be free of all control, including his own.

Why does God endow mankind with free will? One could argue that he does so because free will allows human beings to achieve more and please God further. It's true that free will can be dangerous, since devils can tempt human beings into sin. And yet it's only through free will that humans can truly embrace God--they *choose* to do so, rather than being forced to.

This passage also brings up the important idea of predestination--if God can foresee what will happen, and states it now (and God is never wrong), then do Adam and Eve really have free will? Many of Milton's contemporaries, the Calvinists, believed wholly in predestination--that God has already chosen who goes to Hell and who goes to Heaven, and all human action is just the playing out of that predetermined plan. Milton doesn't buy this idea, however, as he emphasizes with the "free to fall" statement. God's foreknowledge can then be explained with the idea of time. In many versions of Christianity, God exists *outside* of time, and so he can see what will happen in the future, but it's not the future to him--all times exist at once in the scheme of divine eternity. Thus within their own concept of time, Adam and Eve have free will, but to God it's as if they've *already* chosen to sin.

Book 3 Quotes

> So man, as is most just,
> Shall satisfy for man, be judged and die,
> And dying rise, and rising with him raise
> His brethren, ransomed with his own dear life.
> So Heav'nly love shall outdo Hellish hate,
> Giving to death, and dying to redeem,
> So dearly to redeem what Hellish hate
> So easily destroyed, and still destroys
> In those who, when they may, accept not grace.

Related Characters: God the Father (speaker), God the Son, Adam

Related Themes:

Page Number: 3.294-302

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, God continues to explain his plan for the human race to his angels. God explains that mankind will not be wholly damned after its fall. Rather, a future "man" will make a sacrifice, allowing all of mankind to ascend with him back to a state of grace.

God characterizes the sacrifice as crucial to the redemption of humankind. Satan's evil cannot be allowed to win; the only way to make sure that mankind ends up in Heaven is to have someone atone for mankind's innate corruption. Immediately after the passage, God's Son (who, in human form, will be Jesus Christ) volunteers to go to Earth and sacrifice his life for the sake of the human race. (It's also worth noting that the scene was parodied in the second Book of the poem when Satan volunteered to "sacrifice himself" and fly over the abyss to go corrupt the world of men.)

Book 4 Quotes

Be then his love accursed, since love or hate,
To me alike, it deals eternal woe.
Nay cursed be thou; since against his thy will
Chose freely what it now so justly rues.
Me miserable! Which way shall I fly
Infinite wrath, and infinite despair?
Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell;
And in the lowest deep a lower deep
Still threat'ning to devour me opens wide,
To which the Hell I suffer seems a Heav'n.

Related Characters: Satan (speaker), God the Father

Related Themes:

Page Number: 4.69-78

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Satan flies from Hell to Earth. As he travels, he thinks to himself about the misery that is his life now. In Heaven, Satan was happy to be a powerful angel--in Hell, however, Satan is tormented by constant misery; the misery of being hated by God and being the enemy of the universe itself. Satan goes on to say that he carries Hell with him wherever he goes--his bitterness and lust for power is now so intense that he is always miserable, even if he should fly back to Heaven itself.

In short, the passage shows Satan in the depths of despair. He's a glutton for authority--and God will never allow him to satisfy his appetite. As a result, Satan's only solace is to cause misery and pain to others, such as Adam and Eve.

And should I at your harmless innocence
Melt, as I do, yet public reason just,
Honour and empire with revenge enlarged,
By conquering this new world, compels me now
To do what else though damned I should abhor.

Related Characters: Satan (speaker), God the Father

Related Themes:

Page Number: 4.388-392

Explanation and Analysis

In this surprising passage, Satan has arrived in terrestrial paradise. He's stunned by the sight of Adam and Eve--he's never seen a human being before. Moreover, Satan finds the Garden of Eden, and Adam and Eve themselves, to be extremely beautiful. As he stares, Satan goes through inner torment: he realizes that, were he still an obedient angel, he would love the humans' world and try to nurture it, enjoying their beauty and innocence. Yet Satan refuses to allow his own sympathies to change his will. Instead, he resolves to do what he was sent to do: corrupt mankind and destroy this beautiful world.

The passage shows Satan in a somewhat sympathetic light: he's committed to evil yet instinctively still longs for good, and laments what his past actions have brought about. In his pride, however, he feels that he has no choice but to harden his heart and go on with his hateful plan. Milton thus suggests that evil isn't liberation from God's authority; rather, it's a prison of its own. Satan gets no pleasure from undermining paradise--it's a bitter burden for him.

This one, this easy charge, of all the trees
In Paradise that bear delicious fruit
So various, not to taste that only Tree
Of Knowledge, planted by the Tree of Life,
So near grows death to life, whate'er death is,
Some dreadful thing no doubt; for well thou know'st
God hath pronounced it death to taste that Tree,
The only sign of our obedience left
Among so many signs of power and rule
Conferred upon us, and dominion giv'n
Over all other creatures that possess
Earth, air, and sea.

Related Characters: Adam (speaker), God the Father

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 4.421-432

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Milton sets the scene for the fall of man. In paradise, Adam and Eve have one easy job: to tend to the plants and animals (who are all peaceful and tame), and only avoid the Tree of Knowledge, since God has forbidden them from eating its fruit. Adam tells Eve that their job is exceptionally easy, and the reward is great: because of their obedience, God has made them lords of the Garden of Eden, free to command all the animals and enjoy the beauty of Paradise.

Interestingly, Adam tells us that God has warned him not to eat the fruit because it will bring death. And yet Adam doesn't know what death is--he's totally innocent. In other words, God has instructed Adam and Eve to obey him, but hasn't told them why, exactly. There are some who have argued that God has designed the rules of the Garden of Eden so that Adam and Eve will inevitably eat the fruit--the mystery of what the fruit is, and what death is, is simply too interesting to ignore. (Such critics often point to the writings of Saint Paul for an explanation of why prohibition *creates* sin.) Others argue that God has kept humans in a state of ignorance so that they'll be happy forever--they don't know what death is, but that's a very good thing. Yet another idea is that God *eventually* wants Adam and Eve to eat of the Fruit of Knowledge, but only when they're ready, and only when he allows it--thus the tree itself isn't evil, it's only their disobedience to God that's evil.

Straight side by side were laid, nor turned I ween
Adam from his fair spouse, nor Eve the rites
Mysterious of connubial love refused:
Whatever hypocrites austerely talk
Of purity and place and innocence,
Defaming as impure what God declares
Pure, and commands to some, leaves free to all.
Our Maker bids increase, who bids abstain
But our destroyer, foe to God and man?
Hail wedded love, mysterious law, true source
Of human offspring, sole propriety,
In Paradise of all things common else.

Related Characters: God the Father, Adam, Eve

Related Themes:

Page Number: 4.741-752

Explanation and Analysis

In this fascinating passage, Milton defends his interpretation of the Bible. There's a longstanding debate among Christian scholars--did Adam and Eve have sex before their fall from Paradise? Milton declares that they did--in fact, he argues that there's nothing inherently sinful with sex at all, as long as it's practiced in the context of marriage, and done with God's approval. God created human beings to have sex (as expressed in his command to "be fruitful"), though in the Garden of Eden, sex was an entirely different experience for Adam and Eve. Sex wasn't a product of sinful lust at all--rather, Adam and Eve had sex because of their love for each other, for God, and, perhaps, simply because it was pleasurable and innocent.

By praising sex and placing it in Eden, Milton is taking a stand against the Puritanical Christians of his time, who saw all sexuality as inherently sinful and shameful.

Book 5 Quotes

Happiness in his power left free to will,
Left to his own free will, his will though free,
Yet mutable; whence warn him to beware
He swerve not too secure: tell him withal
His danger, and from whom, what enemy
Late fall'n himself from Heav'n, is plotting now
The fall of others from like state of bliss;
By violence, no, for that shall be withstood,
But by deceit and lies; this let him know,
Lest wilfully transgressing he pretend
Surprisal, unadmonished, unforewarned.

Related Characters: God the Father (speaker), Adam, Raphael

Related Themes:

Page Number: 5.235-245

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, God tries his best to keep Adam and Eve "sufficient to have stood yet free to fall." Satan has just visited Eve in a dream and filled her with corrupting thoughts. It seems that Eve is going to tempt Adam to disobey God. God decides to give mankind more of a chance to redeem itself, so they can't claim ignorance when they fall (after all, what you dream about isn't really free will). God thus instructs the angel Raphael to fly to the Garden of Eden and teach the humans about God and Satan, and warn them that Satan might try to tempt them. With the knowledge of Satan, Adam and Eve will have sufficient defenses to ward off Satan in the future.

The passage is important because it refutes the argument that Adam and Eve were inevitably going to be corrupted--they have no freedom to resist. On the contrary, as Milton shows it (diverging from and expanding upon his Biblical inspiration), God took every precaution to keep Adam and Eve free from evil--or, as he puts it, to keep them from *arguing* that they had no freedom after they fall, as God knows they inevitably will.

> Will ye submit your necks, and choose to bend
> The supple knee? ye will not, if I trust
> To know ye right, or if ye know yourselves
> Natives and sons of Heav'n possessed before
> By none, and if not equal all, yet free,
> Equally free; for orders and degrees
> Jar not with liberty, but well consist.
> Who can in reason then or right assume
> Monarchy over such as live by right
> His equals, if in power and splendour less,
> In freedom equal?

Related Characters: Satan (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 5.787-797

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, narrated by Raphael to Adam, Satan assembles his angels and urges them to rebel against the divine authority of God. To do this, he makes a long speech in which he invokes the principles of equality, pride, and freedom. His speech is full of contradictions and hypocrisies, and yet it's also full of interesting points. Notice that Satan's language (freedom, equality, liberty) parallels the language of the European Enlightenment. Furthermore, Satan makes a surprisingly democratic argument, saying that no being should live under the ultimate authority of another being, even if that being is more powerful.

The argument is particularly surprising since Milton actually supported the rebellion of English people against the authority of the king of England--he favored the "commonwealth" of Cromwell over the monarchy of Charles I. Some people have interpreted the speech to mean that Milton himself subconsciously supported Satan's rebellion against God--he couldn't help casting Satan as a democratic crusader challenging a tyrant. Others have argued that Milton saw divine authority as entirely different from earthly authority, and believed that while it's right to depose kings because they are merely human, and don't deserve absolute power, God himself *is* the appropriate divine authority in the hierarchy of the universe, so it's entirely proper that he should rule absolutely.

> Unjust thou say'st
> Flatly unjust, to bind with laws the free,
> And equal over equals to let reign,
> One over all with unsucceeded power.
> Shalt thou give law to God, shalt thou dispute
> With him the points of liberty, who made
> Thee what thou art, and formed the Powers of Heav'n
> Such as he pleased, and circumscribed their being?

Related Characters: Abdiel (speaker), Satan

Related Themes:

Page Number: 5.818-825

Explanation and Analysis

Satan has assembled a band of followers to rebel against God, and tried to sway the angels with bold arguments about rebelling against tyranny. And yet there's one angel who disagrees with Satan: Abdiel. Abdiel tells Satan that he's being absurd for suggesting that he (Satan) has the right to rebel against the supreme authority of the universe, the being who created everyone, including Satan himself. This argument is similar to God's own argument in the Biblical book of Job. God afflicts Job, a righteous man, with

all kinds of trials and tribulations, and Job finally cries out at his unjust treatment. God's ambiguous response is mostly to invoke his own power and wisdom--who is Job to question the being who created Job in the first place? What laws of justice or fairness can Job (or in this case Satan) invoke that God himself didn't create, and doesn't already embody perfectly?

The character of Abdiel also shows that (in Milton's universe at least) angels, like humans after them, have a degree of free will--they can choose to obey or disobey God. This makes Abdiel all the more admirable, in that he not only chooses freely to return to God, but goes against his leader and all his peers in doing so.

Book 7 Quotes

But lest his heart exalt him in the harm
Already done, to have dispeopled Heav'n,
My damage fondly deemed, I can repair
That detriment, if such it be to lose
Self-lost, and in a moment will create
Another world, out of one man a race
Of men innumerable, there to dwell,
Not here, till by degrees of merit raised
They open to themselves at length the way
Up hither, under long obedience tried,
And earth be changed to Heav'n, and Heav'n to earth,
One Kingdom, joy and union without end.

Related Characters: God the Father (speaker), Adam

Related Themes:

Page Number: 7.150-161

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage Raphael is still telling Adam about the history of the world. After Satan rebelled against God and was cast out of paradise, God decided to repopulate his universe with new beings. He decided to create the race of man--in other words, Adam and Eve and all their descendants. By creating Adam and Eve, God said, he would replenish his ranks (replacing the fallen angels) and exercise his own creativity and love. God also lays out a plan that is not strictly adherent to the Bible, but that makes more sense in Milton's universe--God created Adam and Eve as innocent but he gradually intended to "raise" them up until they were like angels themselves, and then God would join the earthly Paradise with Heaven itself. This is a fleeting glimpse of what might have happened had Adam and Eve not eaten of the forbidden fruit, and it both makes God seem more sympathetic (Adam and Eve weren't always going to be ignorant and simple followers, but would have gained God-approved wisdom) and the Fall itself more tragic (instead of this happy progression to Heaven, we get our present world of suffering and struggle).

In terms of the "plot," this quote is important because Adam is hearing it. From hereon out, Adam has no deniability--when he chooses to disobey God, he knows full-well what he's doing: he knows that he is turning down a life of eternal happiness.

Book 8 Quotes

Solicit not thy thoughts with matters hid,
Leave them to God above, him serve and fear;
Of other creatures, as him pleases best,
Wherever placed, let him dispose; joy thou
In what he gives to thee, this Paradise
And thy fair Eve; heav'n is for thee too high
To know what passes there; be lowly wise:
Think only what concerns thee and thy being;
Dream not of other worlds...

Related Characters: Raphael (speaker), God the Father, Adam

Related Themes:

Page Number: 8.167-175

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Adam has just asked Raphael for the truth about the universe: does the Earth revolve around the Sun, or vice versa? Raphael refuses to answer Adam's question. Instead, he tells Adam that he should focus on the here and now: he should focus on being an obedient servant to God, and tending to his wife, Eve.

First, notice that Milton is commenting on the scientific squabbles of his day: Copernicus and Galileo have challenged the Church's usual doctrine by declaring that the Earth revolves around the sun, not the other way around. Milton refuses to take sides in such a debate (and for that matter, he probably didn't want his poem to favor the wrong answer, lest future readers be baffled by the bad science), and instead focuses on how too much knowledge can be sinful. Indeed, it's arguably the quest for forbidden knowledge that is at the heart of the Fall of Man.

Notice, however, that innocent Adam has already developed a curiosity and appetite for knowledge, foreshadowing his disobedience of God. God sent Raphael to reassure Adam

about obeying God and accepting ignorance, and yet Raphael's visit seems to have had the opposite effect: it's made Adam *more* likely to question God's authority and desire more knowledge.

Book 9 Quotes

No more of talk where God or angel guest
With man, as with his friend, familiar used
To sit indulgent, and with him partake
Rural repast, permitting him the while
Venial discourse unblamed: I now must change
Those notes to tragic; foul distrust, and breach
Disloyal on the part of man, revolt,
And disobedience: on the part of Heav'n
Now alienated, distance and distaste,
Anger and just rebuke, and judgment giv'n,
That brought into this world a world of woe,
Sin and her shadow Death, and misery
Death's harbinger...

Related Characters: God the Father, Adam, Sin, Death

Related Themes:

Page Number: 9.1-13

Explanation and Analysis

With the beginning of the final third of the poem, Milton turns to the tragic side of his story. He explains that it's time for him to talk about the fall of man--the tragic, repeatedly-foretold event to which his poem has been building up for hundreds of lines now. Man's fall into sin was a crushing defeat for the universe itself, because it ushered in a history of death, misery, disease--all that we now know of human history.

Milton describes the fall of man here, but doesn't yet mention that man's fall is, ultimately, a good thing, because it paves the way for the coming of Jesus Christ. Milton doesn't give this passage anything like a silver lining: instead, he emphasizes the enormous stakes of Adam and Eve's disastrous decision, and saves his optimism and hope for the poem's end.

O foul descent! that I who erst contended
With Gods to sit the highest, am now constrained
Into a beast, and mixed with bestial slime,
This essence to incarnate and imbrute,
That to the heighth of Deity aspired...
Revenge, at first though sweet,
Bitter ere long back on itself recoils;
Let it; I reck not, so I light well aimed,
Since higher I fall short, on him who next
Provokes my envy, this new favourite
Of Heav'n, this man of clay, son of despite,
Whom us the more to spite his Maker raised
From dust: spite then with spite is best repaid.

Related Characters: Satan (speaker), Adam

Related Themes:

Page Number: 9.163-178

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Satan transforms into a snake. He's come into the Garden of Eden to tempt Eve into disobeying God's authority and eating from the Tree of Knowledge. Satan feels great shame and self-hatred as he transforms into a snake, which he sees as a lowly, ugly beast--he remembers the time when he lived in Heaven and his body was beautiful, and when he even aspired to be equal to God himself. He's fallen a long, long way since that time: now, every second of his life is full of misery. Indeed, he's so miserable that his only pleasure is to cause misery to other.

Milton uses clever language to foreshadow Satan's own punishment. In the final line, Satan mentions dust--after tempting Eve, God punished snakes by condemning them to eat "dust." Furthermore, the word "spite" (echoing several times in the last few lines) recalls the hissing sound of the snake, reflecting Satan's transformation.

Queen of this universe, do not believe
Those rigid threats of death; ye shall not die:
How should ye? by the fruit? it gives you life
To knowledge. By the Threat'ner? look on me,
Me who have touched and tasted, yet both live,
And life more perfect have attained than Fate
Meant me, by vent'ring higher than my lot.
Shall that be shut to man, which to the beast
Is open? or will God incense his ire
For such a petty trespass, and not praise
Rather your dauntless virtue, whom the pain
Of death denounced, whatever thing death be...

Related Characters: Satan (speaker), God the Father, Eve

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 9.684-695

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Satan, disguised as a snake, tries to tempt Eve into eating from the Tree of Knowledge. The snake uses a series of arguments. It claims that it can talk because it ate of the Tree of Knowledge, and the fruit made it wise. The snake also suggests that eating from the tree will elevate Eve's status in life, making her more divine and majestic. Finally, the snake insists that the Tree will not, as God had claimed, make Eve die--the snake has eaten from the tree, and it's clearly not dead. In fact, the snake says that God will praise Eve for eating the fruit, rather than punish her, because eating the fruit shows that she is brave enough to risk death, "whatever thing death be."

One thing to notice about the snake's arguments is that they suggest two opposing sets of morals. One set of morals favors bravery, heroism, striving, and daring uncertainty--one could call this a romantic or chivalric set of values. The other set of values (which the snake criticizes) favors obedience, loyalty, and trust in one's station in life. In the end, the first set of values is just more fun: Eve, who's been shown to be ambitious and curious, wants above her allotted station in life, and this is the sin for which she's ultimately punished.

> What fear I then, rather what know to fear
> Under this ignorance of good and evil,
> Of God or death, of law or penalty?
> Here grows the cure of all, this fruit divine,
> Fair to the eye, inviting to the taste,
> Of virtue to make wise: what hinders then
> To reach, and feed at once both body and mind?
> So saying, her rash hand in evil hour
> Forth reaching to the fruit, she plucked, she ate:
> Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat
> Sighing through all her works gave signs of woe,
> That all was lost.

Related Characters: Eve (speaker), God the Father

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 9.773-784

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Eve finally gives in to the snake's arguments and eats from the Tree of Knowledge. She's persuaded by the snake's points, but mostly because she's a naturally ambitious, inquisitive person. Eve decides that the Tree doesn't really kill people at all--it just makes them wise and intelligent. Like the proverbial child, Eve is interested in eating from the Tree of Knowledge precisely because it is forbidden to her. As a result, she eats, and mankind falls from grace. Even the earth itself "felt the wound" of this small, symbolic action.

Eve's decision to eat from the Tree parallels the Biblical description of the fall of man, though with much more detail thrown in. As in the Bible, Milton writes that the woman ate from the Tree first-- a detail that was often used to justify the lowered position of women in Western society.

> However I with thee have fixed my lot,
> Certain to undergo like doom; if death
> Consort with thee, death is to me as life;
> So forcible within my heart I feel
> The bond of nature draw me to my own,
> My own in thee, for what thou art is mine;
> Our state cannot be severed, we are one,
> One flesh; to lose thee were to lose myself.

Related Characters: Adam (speaker), Eve

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 9.952-959

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Adam discovers that Eve has sinned by eating from the Tree of Knowledge. Adam is still a loyal servant of God, but he also loves Eve, his wife. Therefore, Adam makes a horrible choice; knowing full-well that the fruit of the Tree will destroy him, he eats it. Adam loves Eve so completely that he's blinded to his duty to God.

In the passage, Milton criticizes the chivalric tradition of England. Adam loves his wife so completely that he's willing to disobey God for her sake. Such behavior *could* be

interpreted as romantic and incredibly noble. But Milton sees it as sinful: Adam errs in choosing to love a mortal being more than he loves God. Nevertheless, Milton describes Adam's act of sin as more heroic and perhaps admirable than Eve's: as a result, Adam is punished less harshly than Eve when God discovers his creations' sin.

> O Eve, in evil hour thou didst give ear
> To that false worm, of whomsoever taught
> To counterfeit man's voice, true in our Fall,
> False in promised rising; since our eyes
> Opened we find indeed, and find we know
> Both good and evil, good lost, and evil got,
> Bad fruit of knowledge, if this be to know…

Related Characters: Adam (speaker), Satan, Eve

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 9.1067-1073

Explanation and Analysis

After Adam and Eve have both eaten from the Tree of Knowledge, they at first feel excited and pleased with themselves, and they have lustful sex for the first time. But afterwards, they come to realize that the fruit of the Tree has condemned them to a life of misery: they're aware of sin and evil now, and they're ashamed to be alive. A sure sign of their sinful nature is that they immediately begin to argue amongst themselves. Here, for instance, Adam claims that Eve has destroyed him by tempting him to eat from the Tree--he blames Eve for listening to the snake.

It's ironic that Adam and Eve have begun arguing so forcefully, since only a few hours before, Adam had claimed that he and Eve were "one." Milton shows how feeble and nonsensical such declarations of love really are: Adam and Eve are not, in fact, "one" at all anymore--their sin, instead of romantically bringing them together, has only torn them apart.

> Fair daughter, and thou son and grandchild both,
> High proof ye now have giv'n to be the race
> Of Satan (for I glory in the name,
> Antagonist of Heav'n's Almighty King)
> Amply have merited of me, of all
> Th' infernal empire, that so near Heav'n's door
> Triumphal with triumphal act have met,
> Mine with this glorious work, and made one realm
> Hell and this world, one realm, one continent
> Of easy thoroughfare.

Related Characters: Satan (speaker), Sin, Death

Related Themes:

Page Number: 10.384-393

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Satan has returned to Hell, and encounters his two incestuous offspring, Sin and Death, who have been busy building a bridge from Hell to Earth. Satan proudly tells his children that he has successfully corrupted the entire human race, allowing Sin and Death a "free reign" on Earth.

The passage shows Satan at the height of his power: he thinks that he's succeeded in defeating (or at least wounding) God by tempting Eve and Adam into sin. As a result, Satan believes, Death and Sin are free to further lead Adam and Eve down the path of evil, and make "Hell and this world, one realm" (an echo and perversion of God's earlier plan to make Earth and Heaven one). He even fully accepts the name Satan (which means "Adversary") for the first time--it's not his original angelic name, but one that he now embraces, as he thinks himself as a worthy antagonist to God.

Yet even here at the height of his success, Satan's victory rings hollow: he's spread misery and pain to others, but done nothing to alleviate his own. Indeed, he won't be allowed to glory in his "victory" for long, as God will further punish and humiliate him and the other devils.

Book 11 Quotes

Adam, Heav'n's high behest no preface needs:
Sufficient that thy prayers are heard, and Death,
Then due by sentence when thou didst transgress,
Defeated of his seizure many days
Giv'n thee of grace, wherein thou may'st repent,
And one bad act with many deeds well done
May'st cover: well may then thy Lord appeased
Redeem thee quite from Death's rapacious claim;
But longer in this Paradise to dwell
Permits not; to remove thee I am come,
And send thee from the garden forth to till
The ground whence thou wast taken, fitter soil.

Related Characters: Michael (speaker), God the Father, Adam, Death

Related Themes:

Page Number: 11.251-262

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, the angel Michael comes to Eden to cast out Adam and Eve. Michael is sympathetic to Adam and Eve's pain, but he's also firm--God himself has sent Michael to expel human beings from Paradise forever. Michael explains to Adam that he and his descendants will be forced to live in a hard, challenging world--they'll have to do hard work to survive, tilling soil and hunting for food, and struggling against each other all the while. Nevertheless, Michael makes it clear that Adam isn't totally out of favor with God--Adam will be granted the gift of long life, and it will be many centuries before he dies (in the Bible, we're told that Adam survived for hundreds of years before succumbing to death), so he has plenty of time to repent and make up for his "one bad act with many deeds well done."

Michael's explanation also covers one criticism of the logic in the Bible's story. In Genesis, God first declares that if Adam and Eve eat of the forbidden fruit, they will die "on that day." And yet they obviously don't--so in a way, the serpent (who in the original story is just a snake, not Satan) was right in saying that the fruit would give them knowledge and not kill them. Here, however, Michael smooths over this discrepancy by saying that God has mercifully kept Death away from Adam and Eve for a while, despite the fact that death was "due by sentence when thou didst transgress."

Book 12 Quotes

O execrable son so to aspire
Above his brethren, to himself assuming
Authority usurped, from God not giv'n:
He gave us only over beast, fish, fowl
Dominion absolute; that right we hold
By his donation; but man over men
He made not lord; such title to himself
Reserving, human left from human free.

Related Characters: Adam (speaker), Nimrod

Related Themes:

Page Number: 12.64-71

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Michael gives Adam a vision of the future of the human race. Michael explains that in the future, some humans will fall under the dominion of a great human tyrant named Nimrod. Nimrod, a megalomaniac, will force his subjects to build a huge tower (the Tower of Babel) in an attempt to reach Heaven. Adam is outraged by Michael's description of Nimrod, saying that humans should not rule over other humans--everyone should be equal and worship God together.

The passage is interesting because it suggests something about Milton's political leanings. Milton risked his life to oppose a tyrannical monarchy in England, but he also believes in the total worship of God. As he sees it, humans can only serve one absolute master--the Lord. To serve another, such as a king (or a Pope) is a sin, a violation of the natural order of things.

They looking back, all th' eastern side beheld
Of Paradise, so late their happy seat,
Waved over by that flaming brand, the gate
With dreadful faces thronged and fiery arms:
Some natural tears they dropped, but wiped them soon;
The world was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide:
They hand in hand with wand'ring steps and slow,
Through Eden took their solitary way.

Related Characters: Adam, Eve

Related Themes:

Page Number: 12.641-649

Explanation and Analysis

At the end of the poem, Adam and Eve prepare to leave terrestrial paradise forever. They cry, but only a little bit: their interactions with Michael have inspired them to be strong and look forward to the future. Adam and Eve have been told that one day, a Messiah will redeem mankind from their sins, allowing all human beings to enter Heaven.

The poem is tragic, yet it also ends on a note of cautious optimism. Adam and Eve know that their lives will be long and hard, but also full of fulfillment and discovery. They can no longer walk with God and dine with angels, but "Providence" is still "their guide"--they haven't been totally cast away from God like Satan and his devils. And though they've argued with each other since losing their innocence, husband and wife continue to love and respect each other--thus, they hold each other's hands as they leave Paradise. In short, Milton leaves Adam and Eve to live in a world of sin, confident that one day, sin will be redeemed with the grace of God.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

BOOK 1

Milton introduces his subject: "man's first disobedience" against God and its sorrowful consequences. In the first line Milton refers to the consequences as the "fruit" of disobedience, punning on the fruit of the forbidden Tree of Knowledge, which Adam and Eve will eat against God's commandment. This single act will bring death and suffering into the world, until "one greater man" will come to restore humanity to purity and paradise.

In this opening, Milton condenses and summarizes the subject of his poem – he is trying to write a great epic for the English language, in the tradition of Homer's Iliad *or Virgil's* Aeneid. *Milton is even more ambitious than these classical poets, however, as his subject is not just heroic men, but the struggle and tragedy of all humanity. Already in this first sentence Milton points to the scope of Christian history, from Adam to Jesus ("one greater man").*

Milton then invokes a Muse, but clarifies that this is a different Muse from the inspirational goddesses the ancient Greek poets called upon – he asks for the Muse that inspired Moses to write Genesis. This Muse is greater than the classical Muse, so Milton hopes that his poem will achieve "things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme." He associates his Muse with the Holy Spirit, which is part of the Trinity and a force in the creation of the universe. He asks for this divine inspiration that he might "assert Eternal Providence, / And justify the ways of God to men."

In this invocation Milton sets the pattern for the whole poem. He points to his classical forebears, respecting them and seeking to enter into their epic canon, but at the same time he wants to soar beyond them in terms of ambition and truth. Milton's Muse is the Holy Spirit, and his subject the Fall of Man, so his epic will be more fundamentally true (to the Christian worldview) and more sweeping in scope than the epics of Homer or Virgil. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the traditional Christian Trinity, but Milton did not consider the Holy Spirit as equal to God.

After this prologue, Milton asks the Muse to describe what first led to Adam and Eve's disobedience. He answers himself that they were deceived into "foul revolt" by the "infernal Serpent," who is Satan. Satan was an angel who aspired to overthrow God, and started a civil war in Heaven. God defeated Satan and his rebel angels and threw them out of Heaven. They fell through an abyss for nine days and then landed in Hell, where they lay stunned for nine more days.

Milton includes not only Adam and Eve's disobedience, but also the original disobedience in Heaven – Satan's rebellion against God, which is the ultimate revolt of creature against creator. Much of the poem's plot will come from the first books of Genesis in the Bible, but the parts about the war in Heaven are based on various scattered Bible verses and Milton's own conjecture.

The poem then focuses on Satan as he lies dazed in a lake of fire that is totally dark. Next to him is Beelzebub, Satan's second-in command, and Satan speaks to him, finally breaking the "horrid silence." Satan laments their current state, and how far they have fallen from their previous glorious state as angels. He admits that he has been defeated, but he does not regret his war against God (though he never calls God by name). He claims that his heavenly essence cannot be killed, and as long as his life and will remains Satan vows to keep fighting against the "tyranny of Heav'n."

Like all epics, the tale begins "in media res," or in the middle of the action, and the backstory will be explained later. Milton inverts tradition by beginning with the antagonist, Satan, instead of a protagonist. One of the great debates about Paradise Lost *has been just how much of an "antagonist" Satan is, however, as he is the poem's most dynamic and interesting character. Some critics have felt that Milton subconsciously sympathized with Satan even as he tried to "justify" God.*

Beelzebub answers, saying that God (whom he also avoids naming) seems to be omnipotent as he had originally claimed, and he may have let the rebellious angels live just so they could suffer forever. Satan doesn't contradict this, but he remains resolved to "ever do ill" and try to pervert God's works into evil, especially when God "out of our evil seek[s] to bring forth good." Satan then suggests they leave the burning lake and find shelter on a distant shore.

Satan's is the first and greatest revolt against the hierarchy of God's universe. God arranges all his creation according to rank, and Satan upset this order by trying to do battle with God himself, the supreme monarch of all. Satan accepts that he has been defeated, but his pride is still too great to ask God for repentance. He will continue to suffer inner turmoil over this decision.

Milton describes the terrible size and appearance of Satan's body, which is like a whale or a Greek Titan floating on the waves. Slowly Satan drags himself from the "liquid fire." Beelzebub follows, and they spread their wings and fly over the lake to a place of dry land. They are pleased that they can do this of their own strength and "Not by the sufferance of supernal power."

Like the greatest of epic poets, Milton's language is rich and grandiose. The critic Samuel Johnson commented on Milton's power of "displaying the vast, illuminating the splendid, enforcing the awful, darkening the gloomy, and aggravating the dreadful." The devils like to think they can act of their own agency, but Milton will show that nothing in the universe happens without God's consent.

As they fly Satan laments the desolation of Hell as compared to the glory of Heaven, but he accepts that "The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n," so he would no longer be satisfied in Heaven anyway. He resolves to make the best of the situation, and declares that it is "Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heav'n." Beelzebub then suggests that Satan summon his armies, as they will answer their leader's voice.

Satan makes this comment rather glibly now, but he will later feel its full implications when he realizes that he carries the pain of Hell within him even in Paradise. "Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heav'n" becomes something like his life motto, as he steadfastly refuses to accept God's rulership, and struggles against his creator in whatever way he can.

Satan takes up his terrible armor, and he calls to his legions to join him on land and take up the fight again. The rebel angels obey and pull themselves from the fiery lake despite their pain and shame. Milton says that all these angels have had their names erased in Heaven, but they are later given new names by humans and some will be worshipped as false gods.

Milton describes Satan's magnificent size and terrible appearance through many epic similes, but the overall picture of him is still vague – in such grand, imaginative places like Hell and Heaven, size is relative. The devils can change their size and shape, and Satan will gradually become smaller and lowlier in his incarnations, showing the corrupting effects of his disobedience, and Milton's Biblical idea that with goodness comes power.

Among these more prominent devils are Moloch, who later becomes a god requiring the sacrifice of children, Astoreth (the ancient fertility goddess called Astarte), the sea-monster Dagon, the animal-headed Egyptian gods, the ancient Greek gods, and lastly Belial, a lustful and violent god who will corrupt places like Sodom. These fallen angels are given hope by Satan's strong appearance, and they flock to him. They are still dressed in their war gear and have their banners raised, and they create an awesome spectacle as they form ranks and lift their spears.

Milton's list of warriors echoes similar lists in the Iliad *and the* Aeneid, *but he also reminds us that no matter how magnificent the devils appear, they just lost the war in Heaven. Milton reinforces the truth and ambition of his epic by casting all other gods – including the Greek and Roman gods of earlier epics – as merely fallen angels, lesser powers leading ancient nations away from God's truth.*

Satan is encouraged by the sight of his glorious army, which is far more magnificent than any of the famous human armies of later wars. Satan feels a moment of remorse for causing the suffering of so many millions by leading them into rebellion, but then he is strengthened in his resolve. He addresses his legions and commits himself to continue his fight against God – his only question now is whether to go back to open war or use more deceitful tactics. He mentions that God had spoken of creating a new world, and that the devils might escape there and make a new home.

Milton will often compare his characters and spectacles to famous examples from human history or other epics, but he almost always places his subjects (in this case the devil army) as "more than" these – more magnificent, more beautiful, huger. Satan acts as a "democratic" sort of leader, asking his devils for their opinions, but in reality he has already decided his plan – he assumes that the rebellion against God will continue.

At Satan's words the rebel angels all draw their flaming swords and reaffirm their defiance against Heaven. They then fly to a nearby hill and begin to dig into the earth, unearthing gold and other raw minerals. They are urged on by Mammon, a vain devil who even in Heaven kept his eyes always on the ground, admiring the golden pavement. Milton warns the reader about admiring the rich minerals of Hell, as they are nothing but vanity.

Satan's great power is his persuasive words, as he convinces the devils to continue their revolt even after he led them into a hopeless war against God. "Mammon" basically means "riches," which Jesus warns against on the Sermon on the Mount, but Mammon itself is often personified as a prince of devils.

With their supernatural powers the devils construct a massive temple in a short amount of time. This temple is larger and more magnificent than the pyramids of Egypt or any temple humans ever built. The architect is a devil called Mulciber, who will become the Greek god Hephaestus, thrown by Zeus from Olympus. The devils call the temple "Pandaemonium" ("all demons" in Greek). The devils can change in size and shape, so they shrink from giants into dwarfs and then all the hundreds of thousands enter Pandaemonium. They sit on golden seats and then begin their debate.

Milton was a radical Protestant opposed to the corrupt hierarchy of the Catholic and Anglican churches, and many of his critiques are leveled at their vanity and concern with earthly riches. Pandaemonium then becomes a grotesque parody of the most magnificent churches, all glitter and no substance. The devils shrink in size to enter the structure, but we had no clear idea how big they were before, as size is relative in Hell. Milton again associates a beloved Greek god with a devil.

BOOK 2

Satan addresses his armies from a magnificent golden throne. He claims that Heaven is not yet lost for them, and that they might reclaim it by returning to battle. He praises the "firm accord" of all the rebellious angels, and their seemingly democratic state. He then opens the floor, asking whether they should fight God openly or with "covert guile."

Milton satirizes political debates in this devilish council. Milton opposed the monarchies in England and was a proponent of individual freedoms, and he wrote Paradise Lost *while in hiding from King Charles II.*

The first speaker is Moloch, who was one of the fiercest fighters in the war. Moloch argues for open war, as he reasons that nothing – not even total annihilation – could be worse than the devils' current state in Hell, so they have nothing to lose by fighting "the Torturer" (God) and trying the weapons of Hell against him. At the very least they might disturb the peace of Heaven and wound God on his throne, and so have revenge "if not victory."

The devils never name God, instead describing him with epithets. This shows the power of names in Paradise Lost, *as the devils' original, angelic names are erased from Heaven as part of their fall. The devils' debate is by necessity a choice between several evils, as is most politics in Milton's mind. For him God was the only rightful ruler, and any human government was inherently partly unjust.*

The next speaker is Belial, who was always beautiful and eloquent but whose words rang hollow even in Heaven. He contradicts Moloch's advice, and suggests that God can always punish them in a worse way if they attack him again. Belial makes the best of the devils' current situation, pointing out that they are no longer chained to the lake of fire, but are sitting and peacefully debating. Belial describes a Hell many times worse, and in the face of this he advocates that the devils submit to "The Victor's will."

Belial is the epitome of the learned politician, but in him Milton shows how political power corrupts, and religious and political leaders deceive the public or do evil things in the name of the greater good. This "debate" between the devils is in reality a farce, as Satan has already made his decision and is simply letting his followers play at democracy.

Belial suggests that if they do not attack, then God might eventually abate in his anger, and so lessen the devils' suffering. Belial defends his own hatred of Heaven, but overall he advocates that they take no action so as to avoid further pain. Milton points out that this is "ignoble ease and peaceful sloth, / Not peace."

Everything is relative in the shifting world of Hell, and Belial perhaps wisely suggests that there can always be worse punishment from an omnipotent God. Sloth is one of the deadly sins, and Milton notes that Belial does not propose making peace with God, but simply being lazy and avoiding pain.

Mammon speaks next, and describes how futile it would be to submit to God and try to return to Heaven. Now that they have known revolt and freedom, they can never again submit to God's rule and sing "Forced hallelujahs," "in worship paid / To whom we hate." Mammon also rejects war as hopeless, and instead proposes that the devils peacefully expand their own freedom in their new realm of Hell. He proposes that they mine more of the gold and minerals they have found, and work hard to build a world and society that will rival Heaven.

Mammon echoes Satan's feelings that the devils are still too proud to submit to God, even though they recognize that they have been defeated. By presenting the devils' critiques of God first, Milton "tempts" the reader into sympathizing with them and also finding God tyrannical, requiring "forced hallelujahs." The question is whether Milton will later undercut these criticisms and "justify God," or whether his God remains legalistic and unsympathetic.

When Mammon finishes speaking all the devils applause, clearly favoring his argument above the rest. They all fear a worse Hell than the one they live in now, and they also fear "thunder and the sword of Michael" should they go back to war. Beelzebub then stands to speak and the crowd falls respectfully silent. Beelzebub says that he also would prefer freedom in Hell to servitude in Heaven, but he warns that they are not free here – they are God's "captive multitude."

Milton reminds us that though the army of devils is terrible and huge, they are all still afraid of Heaven's army, which was far more powerful. Beelzebub acts as Satan's mouthpiece here, keeping up the appearance of a fair political debate. Satan's great argument against God is that God restricts his freedom, which connects to the theme of free will and predestination.

Beelzebub then proposes an "easier enterprise" – he returns to Satan's rumor that God planned to create a new world. This world will be filled with a race called Man, who will be less powerful than the angels but more favored by God. Beelzebub suggests that the devils find this new world and either corrupt or destroy it, thus having revenge on God by ruining his joy and making him "Abolish his own works." Milton says that Satan first came up with this idea, as he is the "author of all ill," but God still plans to use the devils' spite to further his own glory.

Satan (through Beelzebub) finally makes the proposal that will lead to the Fall of Man and the poem's main plot. The devils continue in their sin (and so their punishment) by refusing to submit to God even after their defeat, and insisting on trying to ruin his creation and bring evil out of good. God, being eternal, can foresee these plans and so will look farther ahead to bring good out of their evil.

The devils agree to Beelzebub's proposal and vote for it unanimously. Beelzebub speaks again, describing how they might find a better home in this new world of Man, and heal themselves of the pains of Hell. Then he asks for a volunteer, as they need someone to first cross the great abyss and find the "happy isle" of the new world. There is a long silence, as all the devils are afraid to take this "dreadful voyage." Finally Satan grandiosely volunteers himself, promising to undergo all the hardships of the journey and earn his place as ruler of Hell.

The devils succumb to Satan's tricks without even realizing it, as Eve will later. This next scene also becomes a parody of a Heavenly scene in the next book, where the Son volunteers to die for humanity's sake out of love for them. So Satan volunteers to "sacrifice" himself for the other devils, risking his safety to cross the abyss and corrupt Earth. The devils still hope for a happier home, not realizing they carry their suffering with them.

Satan commands the other devils to work at making Hell "more tolerable" while he is away, and to tend to their wounds. He stands and the other devils bow to him, honoring him as a god "equal to the highest in Heav'n." They especially praise his bravery at sacrificing himself for the good of all. Milton comments how even the devils of Hell could come to such peaceful accord, while humans fight endless wars against each other.

Again Hell acts as a grotesque mirror of Heaven, where Satan is worshipped as a selfless, heroic God. Milton mockingly praises the devils' "accord" (which was actually just a clever fraud by Satan) to further satirize the political evils he saw in the world.

The council is dismissed and the devils exit Pandaemonium. Some devils tear up the earth in a frenzy, others sing songs of their lost glory, and others discuss the council or the concepts of fate and free will, but these last always end up "in wand'ring mazes lost." Other devils fly over the rivers Styx, Acheron, Cocytus, and Phlegethon, and explore the geography of Hell, discovering new horrors and punishments everywhere.

Milton then moves to satirizing philosophical debates. The motif of the "maze" will recur throughout the poem, as Milton associates it with a quest for forbidden knowledge that leads nowhere. Part of the lesson of Paradise Lost *is to accept the knowledge God has given and not delve too deeply into philosophy or conjecture, but live in simple obedience.*

Meanwhile Satan flies off towards the gates of Hell, and sees that there are actually nine gates – three of brass, three of iron, and three of adamantine. In front of the gates sit two strange guards. One has the upper body of a woman, but her lower half is a serpent, and a pack of howling "Hell-hounds" circles her waist. The other is just a black, terrifying figure. Satan confronts the dark figure first and demands passage through the gates. The figure mocks Satan's defeat in Heaven and commands him to return to his "punishment."

The gates of Hell echo the gates of Heaven, but God seems to purposefully allow Satan to escape Hell so that he can tempt Adam and Eve. These two monsters (revealed as Sin and Death) are physical figures in the poem, but also symbols of the concepts they represent.

Satan burns with anger and the two are about to do battle, but the "snaky sorceress" intercedes, calling Satan "father" and the dark figure his "only son." Satan asks her to explain, and the woman-beast says that she is Satan's daughter – in Heaven, when Satan was still an angel, she had sprung forth from his head when he first conceived of rebelling against God. She was called "Sin," and she was beautiful then and soon won over the other angels. Satan himself became "enamoured" with her and incestuously impregnated her in secret.

The relationship between Satan, Sin, and Death is symbolic of both a perverted Trinity and the concepts themselves – Satan, the father of disobedience and revolt, gives birth to sin, and therefore all sin is the product of disobedience against God. Sin is at first frightening but then beautiful and seductive, like the lure of sin to humans.

Then the war had broken out in Heaven, and Sin was cast into Hell with the other rebel angels, but before she fell she was given a key to Hell's gates and instructed to keep them shut forever. After she arrived in Hell, Sin gave birth to the dark figure, who is called "Death." Death immediately pursued Sin and raped her, and she then gave birth to the hounds that now torture her, gnawing constantly at her insides. Now she and Death sit guarding the gates together, hating each other but bound together by fate.

Sin's ultimate fate shows the result of all sin – loneliness and torment. Death is sin's offspring, showing Milton's point that Death was not originally part of Earth, but was the product of disobedience (Satan) and sin (Sin). The incestuous trio of Satan, Sin, and Death is also a grotesque mirror of the Holy Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – though Milton did not believe the Spirit was equal to the Father and Son.

Satan, who seems to have forgotten all of this, now speaks more kindly to Sin and Death. He reveals his plan to find God's new world and corrupt it, and he promises to bring Sin and Death with him once he has made it ready. Sin and Death both seem pleased at this, especially Death, as his hunger is insatiable and he always desires new lives to take. Sin repeats her instructions to guard Hell's gates, but then declares that she would rather obey her father Satan than God, whom she hates. She takes out "the fatal key, / Sad instrument of all our woe," and unlocks the gates.

In giving Sin the key to Hell, God seems to implicitly encourage Satan's escape and therefore the temptation and fall of humanity. This is one of the situations where Milton wrestles with free will and predestination – if God is all-powerful, then nothing can happen against his will, but many evil things do *happen, so God must at least allow this evil or plan for it.*

The gates open and remain open, as Sin does not have the power to close them again. On the other side is a dark abyss of Chaos and Night. These are the raw materials of all creation, and the atoms of "Hot, Cold, Moist, and Dry" do battle constantly there. Chaos personified rules this realm, the "dark materials" that God used to create the universe. Satan spreads his wings and leaps into the abyss, but he immediately starts to fall. He might have fallen forever, but "by ill chance" a fiery wind catches him and blows him upward.

Chaos and night are a departure from traditional Christian dogma, as Milton portrays this chaotic matter as uncreated and existing before the universe along with God himself. In describing the scope of humanity and Heaven, Milton also includes some of the science of his day, like the elemental makeup of the universe. Again "ill chance" helps Satan – but by necessity this must be also condoned by God.

Satan flies over the strange, "boggy" landscape and then hears a great cacophony of noise. He approaches the noise and sees Chaos himself, along with his consort Night and others like Chance, Confusion, and Discord. Satan speaks respectfully to them, asking for directions to Earth and promising to return it to its original state of disorder, thus bringing it back under Chaos's power. Chaos recognizes Satan and tells him where the universe of Man is, hoping that Satan will create "havoc and spoil and ruin" there.

Chaos also becomes personified as a mysterious, vague figure who is the antagonist of all God's order and hierarchy – yet Chaos is not God's personal adversary like Satan is, but is allowed to have his realm of darkness and confusion. Even though Chaos stands against all order, he still accepts his place within God's hierarchy and does not try to overstep his bounds, which is Satan's great sin.

Satan moves onward, but his path grows very difficult and dangerous. Milton compares it to the voyages of Ulysses or the Argonauts, but says that Satan's journey was even more perilous. Sin and Death follow behind him, as "such was the will of Heav'n," and they start building a bridge from Hell to Earth. They make the bridge wide and easy so that devils can enter earth and tempt mortals, and so that mortals will easily be lured down to Hell. Finally Satan approaches the new world and his journey grows easier, and he can see the far-off light of Heaven. The whole universe of humanity is just a small star in the huge darkness.

Milton again compares his epic to those of the past but expands the scale and grandiosity. Satan isn't just travelling over dangerous seas, he is travelling over the vast abyss between Hell and Earth. With Sin and Death's bridge, Milton tries to justify the immense suffering caused by Adam and Eve's later disobedience. They don't just offend God's sensibilities, they also allow these monsters to enter Earth and infect every living thing. Milton changes his focus, reminding the reader of Earth's insignificance as he prepares to describe Heaven.

BOOK 3

Milton opens by again invoking his Muse, this time calling it "holy Light, offspring of Heav'n first-born." He asks for this heavenly inspiration to illuminate his heart and mind so that he can describe Heaven and God. Milton comments on his own blindness, which he compares to that of the Greek prophet Tiresias, and says that he would rather have "celestial Light / Shine inward" than be able to see as other mortals do.

Milton further associates his Muse with the Holy Spirit without explicitly naming it. Milton was totally blind by the time he wrote Paradise Lost, *and he mostly dictated the poem to his daughter. As with Tiresias, who was blind but gifted with prophetic sight, Milton hopes for a kind of inner vision.*

The scene then moves to Heaven, where God the Father sits on his throne with his Son at his right hand. Together they watch Adam and Eve in the "happy garden" of Eden, and they see Satan flying across the gulf between Hell and Earth. God sees not only this but also all the past and future at once. He speaks to the Son and describes how Satan broke free from Hell, and the results of Satan's arrival on Earth.

Milton was a Puritan Christian, but he rejected the idea of predestination held by many of his contemporaries, particularly the Calvinists. God is eternal, existing outside of time, so for Milton God can see the future and plan for it without affecting it. In this way he knows Adam and Eve will fall, but they still have free will in the moment of their falling.

God says that Adam and Eve will listen to Satan's "glozing lies" and disobey God, leading to their "fall." Though God foresees all this, he frees himself of blame by saying that humanity will fall of its own free will, as God has given Adam and Eve the freedom to obey or disobey. Without this free will humans would not be capable of sincere love and worship of God. God affirms his own foreknowledge, but rejects the idea of predestination – he knows what will happen but does not control it, and instead allows humans to act for themselves.

God argues with Milton's voice against his critics, saying that free will is a necessity of true love and obedience. If God "predestined" all his creatures to obey or rebel, then no worship or love could be truly sincere. Though with this argument Milton frees God from predestining the Fall, God still allows Satan to escape and reach Earth, and orchestrates the situation so that the whole mortal universe can descend into suffering and death through one apple.

God declares that he will be merciful in his punishment of mankind, as Adam and Eve will be led into disobedience by Satan instead of on their own. For Satan and his angels, however, there will be no mercy, as they are "Self-tempted" and so totally guilty. God finishes speaking and divine aromas fill Heaven, and then attention turns to the Son, who shines with all the glory of God the Father. The Son speaks, praising God, but then asks if God will give up humanity as lost and so let Satan have his revenge.

Compared to Satan's dynamic agency and inner turmoil, the scenes in Heaven seem more boring and passive, but this is beside the point for Milton. Because God is omnipotent and omniscient, he cannot be surprised by anything or experience any doubts, as he is always right. Milton attempts to describe Heaven using the "fallen language" of Earth by emphasizing its brightness, music, and aroma.

God praises his Son and promises to save some humans who choose to trust in God. He says he will put his spirit into humanity as an "umpire conscience," and constantly warn them of their "sinful state." If they will repent and be obedient he will listen, but there still must be a worthy sacrifice to satisfy his own divine Justice and allow him to be merciful. God then rhetorically asks who in all of Heaven would volunteer to suffer and die on behalf of fallen humanity.

Though God exists outside of time and knows everything, this "conversation" surely does not need to take place (especially as the Father and Son are of one essence), but Milton can only portray such divine "decisions" through dramatic dialogue like this. God holds himself to his own standard of Justice and Mercy that presupposes all the conditions of the current Earth – he is somehow "bound" to let Sin and Death into Earth as justice against Adam and Eve.

All the angels are silent, but then the Son volunteers himself. He promises to become mortal and give himself up to Death, but then break Death's power and return victorious to life, bringing with him all of humanity. He will then return to Heaven with his "redeemed" and sit again with God, who can now be both just and merciful. All of Heaven is filled with admiration for the Son's great bravery and love.

Milton has shown the parody of this scene in Hell, but now he portrays the peak and glory of Divine love – the Son sacrificing himself for humanity. This is a prophecy of Jesus's coming to Earth, and the future when fallen man will return to innocence and glory.

God praises the Son, describing how he will be born of a virgin, and explaining that in one man (Adam) humanity will be condemned, but also in one man (the Son made mortal) humanity will be redeemed. Adam is the sinful "root," but the Son is the "second root" in whom humans will be "transplanted" and find new life – unless they reject God's grace, in which case they will still be condemned to Hell.

Milton emphasizes the motif of "one man" throughout the poem, as he basically divides human history into the acts of two individuals – Adam's sin and Jesus's death and resurrection. As one man causes the death of all, so one man will cause the life of all.

God declares that through the Son's sacrifice "Heav'nly love shall outdo Hellish hate," and he will bring good out of the evil of the Fall. The Son has also proved himself as worthy of God by volunteering himself, and God promises that all angels, humans, and devils will one day bow to him. God then describes the Last Judgment, when the Son will return to the Earth in glory to resurrect the saints and shut the gates of Hell forever, "her numbers full." Then Earth will burn and be resurrected as a new world, where the saints will rule and be at one with God in a new Paradise.

God doesn't plan for the Fall, but he can still arrange his plans around it and so bring good out of evil. His overarching intentions are to bring greater glory to himself and greater good to his creation, but at times God also seems to act to spite Satan. In a way this allows Satan a small bit of revenge, in that he at least affects the actions of the Almighty. Only after the Son's sacrifice can everything be restored to the proper order.

As soon as God stops speaking the Heavenly choirs of angels break out in song, throwing down their beautiful crowns and praising the goodness, power, and wisdom of both Father and Son. They acclaim their mercy and justice, and the Son's selfless sacrifice for humanity's sake.

Part of the joy and order of Heaven involves a kind of ceaseless worship of God. Milton felt no problem with this supreme monarchy as he saw God as the rightful ruler, whereas upstarts like Satan (or Charles I and II) were tyrants upsetting the proper hierarchy.

The scene then returns to Satan as he approaches Earth. He lands in what is now China and walks about, but there are not any living things there yet, or any of the "vain things" that will distract humans from God in the future. Milton digresses to muse on the possibility of extraterrestrial life, mock the Franciscan and Dominican orders of monks, and describe Limbo as the "Paradise of Fools." Satan keeps wandering and eventually comes to a magnificent gate of gold and diamond.

After the passive discussion of Heaven, Satan's actions seem more interesting, even though he is the ostensible antagonist. Milton uses his long comparisons and digressions to flesh out his own religious and political views – he disapproved of religious orders and the corrupt hierarchy he saw in the Catholic and Anglican churches, preferring an individual relationship with God and an independence of mind in matters of dogma.

Behind the gate are stairs leading up to Heaven – Milton says this is "Jacob's ladder" that the Biblical Jacob will later dream about, with angels descending and ascending. In this pre-Fall world Heaven directly overlooks the Earth. Satan flies over the gate and climbs a little way up the stairs. He look down over the Earth and sees all its lush glory, but he feels as much envy as wonder. He is soon drawn by the sun, which reminds him of Heaven's light, and he flies towards it.

In his language of "illuminating the splendid," Milton devotes much of the poem to describing the innocence and lush beauty of the pre-Fallen Earth. This only heightens the tragedy of the Fall, when every aspect of the Earth is transformed by Sin, Death, and God's angels. Satan is still drawn by light and beauty, though he also hates and envies it.

Satan lands on the surface of the sun and Milton describes its magical substance, like liquid gold. From there Satan looks back to Earth and sees an angel standing on a hill. Satan is pleased, as he hopes the angel is there to guard Paradise. Satan transforms his shape into a young Cherub, or a small, low-ranking angel, and then he flies off towards the angel on the hill. This angel is the Archangel Uriel, one of the seven most powerful angels who stand closest to God's throne.

Satan undergoes another transformation, again decreasing in size and glory as he becomes a "low-ranking" angel instead of his former glorious self. His transformations throughout the poem become a grotesque echo of the Son's Incarnation, as Satan begins as a huge, terrible warrior and ends as a toad and a serpent.

Satan approaches Uriel and addresses him respectfully, saying that he has just come down from Heaven and is curious to see God's new world and its inhabitants, as he wants to better praise God for his glorious works. Satan's speech and appearance are so perfect that Uriel cannot see through his disguise, though he is the "sharpest sighted Spirit of all in Heav'n." Uriel is pleased at the Cherub's zeal, and he describes how God created the Earth out of Chaos, uniting the elements of "earth, flood, air, fire" and the "ethereal quintessence of heav'n" which forms the stars. Uriel then points out the location of Paradise, and Satan bows low and flies gladly towards it.

Satan expands on his ability to deceive others, especially those who are innocent and good. Part of the idea of innocence in Paradise Lost *(and in Genesis) involves a kind of ignorance – the Fall is basically longing for knowledge of good and evil beyond what God has allowed. So even Uriel the sharp-eyed Archangel has no real knowledge of evil, and can be easily deceived by Satan. Milton references the order inherent even in matter itself, according to the Christian-based science of his day.*

BOOK 4

Milton begins by again lamenting the Fall of Man, and wishing that Adam and Eve had escaped Satan's "mortal snare." Meanwhile Satan lands on a mountain near Eden and looks upon the glory of Paradise. He is wracked with doubt at the sight of such beauty and innocence. Satan remembers his own former glory, and recognizes how unfairly he has rebelled against God, who never showed him anything but goodness. Satan wishes he had not been made such a powerful Archangel, as otherwise he might not have aspired to even more power and the overthrow of God.

Satan was supremely confident in Hell, when he was trying to impress his followers and was still convinced that he could make a "Heaven of Hell." Now that he has reached Paradise, however, he sees that the opposite is also true – he makes a Hell of Heaven. No matter how perfect his surroundings, Satan carries Hell within himself in the form of his hatred, envy, and separation from God.

Satan briefly considers what would happen if he repented and subdued himself to God, but he knows that this could only be a false confession. He knows that if he returned to Heaven, he could not bow down or be reconciled after such "wounds of deadly hate have pierced so deep." He reasons that if he knows this, then God must know it too, explaining why God has not offered Satan any mercy. Satan accepts his own misery and realizes that he brings Hell with him wherever he goes now, as he is the incarnation of Hell, and will be unhappy even in Paradise.

Satan preempts the obvious question of why God doesn't show mercy to the devils – they haven't repented. Despair is one of the worst sins, as God offers no forgiveness unless his creature asks for it. Satan gives in to despair here and so condemns himself to eternal Hell, unwilling to repent and still clinging to his pride and doomed fate of suffering.

Finally embracing his fallen state and doom of eternal misery, Satan decides to pursue the only path he perceives as left to him – he will work his hardest to commit evil deeds, and try to pervert God's goodness. Satan does not realize that as he is having this internal debate, his dark shifts in mood have shown on his face. This reveals him "counterfeit," as no Cherub would be subject to such inner turmoil. Uriel sees this from afar and realizes that he has been deceived.

Satan accepts his role as the "Adversary" (the meaning of "Satan" in Aramaic). As long as he despairs of forgiveness and refuses to submit to God, the only path left to him is suffering and hate. He then decides to make the most of this and bring others into his suffering if he can, or at least lash out in blind spite against God.

Satan then comes to the border of Paradise, which is surrounded by a high wall of thickets, beyond which are many tall and beautiful fruit trees giving off heavenly odors. Satan leaps easily over the wall like a "prowling wolf" entering a sheep's pen, or like "lewd hirelings" (paid clergy) climbing into God's Church. Satan immediately flies to the tallest tree in the center of Eden, the Tree of Life, and he perches atop it in the shape of a cormorant (a sea bird).

Milton throws in a critique of the church of his day – he disapproved of paid clergy as more interested in wealth and earthly vanity than keeping their minds on God. Satan is associated with two predatory animals here, a wolf and a cormorant, as his transformations continue to grow less glorious. The cormorant was seen as a "sinful" animal because of its gluttonous appetite.

Satan looks down on Paradise, the Garden of Eden, and examines its lushness and geography. Next to the Tree of Life is the Tree of Knowledge, "our death." Milton describes the beautiful flowers, fruits, and trees of Eden, which is more fair than any of the famous gardens of Greek mythology. After surveying "undelighted all delight," Satan notices two creatures walking upright and appearing more noble than all the other animals. They shine with "The image of their glorious Maker," beautiful and innocent, the woman submissive to the man. They are naked but without sin or shame, and they walk past Satan hand in hand.

Milton extends all his powers of language to describe the glory of the Paradise that will soon be lost. Many of Milton's Puritan contemporaries held the human body to be inherently sinful, but Milton asserts the "naked glory" of Adam and Eve, affirming that nakedness was the proper and holy state of humans before they were corrupted by lust and shame. The "protagonists"—Adam and Eve—finally enter.

The humans rest beside a fountain, and they eat fruits and drink from the fountain. Wild animals play innocently around them, and predators like lions and bears are tame and vegetarian. The sun begins to set and Satan is speechless at the beauty and innocence of these creatures, but then he begins an inner monologue, as he is once more filled with great turmoil.

Milton himself advocated a vegetarian diet, and he expands on this by portraying the pre-Fallen world as entirely vegetarian. Thus Adam and Eve's sin also changed the nature of all animals, so that many became predators. Humans are also shown as the rightful masters of the animals, who act friendly and tame.

Satan experiences new grief and envy, and he feels he could have loved these humans. He seems to regret the suffering he is about to cause them, but he feels again that he has no choice, and is condemned by damnation to do evil. He then flies down from the tree to the ground and takes on different shapes of animals, gradually approaching the human pair.

Satan grows more distraught and less reasonable as the poem progresses. He is genuinely moved by the beauty and innocence of Paradise and Adam and Eve, but he purposefully overcomes his better nature and continues in his futile crusade of hate.

As Satan approaches, the man, whose name is Adam, speaks to the woman, Eve. Adam says that they should praise God for their bounty and happiness, and not complain about the easy work they have to do tending to the garden. He says they must remain obedient, as God has given them many blessings, and dominion over all the Earth, and has only forbidden one thing: they are not to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, as it will cause their death. Adam does not know what death is, but thinks it is "Some dreadful thing no doubt."

The forbidden tree is first introduced and immediately associated with Adam and Eve's lack of knowledge. Again innocence is associated with ignorance, as Adam states God's command and then admits his own ignorance of what kind of punishment "death" is. They are supposed to be content with God's command and not try to learn more than he has decreed.

Eve agrees with Adam, and praises him as her superior. She then describes her first memories of existence. She came to life as if waking from a sleep "under a shade of flow'rs," immediately "wond'ring where / And what I was, whence thither brought, and how." She followed a stream to its source at a clear lake, and looked into the water. Eve saw her reflection in the pool and was entranced by its beauty. She says she would still be trapped there had not a mysterious voice spoken to her and told her that the image was her own reflection.

Milton begins to express his ideas about women, which generally reflect those of his time and culture. For him, women are inherently inferior to men and should "submit" to them. This passage illustrates this in several ways: Eve awakens in the shade, separated from God's light, and she immediately becomes entranced by her reflection. This shows that she is easily distracted by vain surfaces, and also that she herself is a "reflection" of Adam – Adam was made in God's image, while Eve was made in Adam's image.

The voice then told Eve to leave her reflection, and she obeyed. She found Adam under a "platan" tree, and at first thought him "less fair" than herself and so wanted to return to her reflection, but Adam called to her. He explained that she was created out of his flesh and bone, and that they were meant to be together. He then took Eve's hand and she yielded to him, from then on acknowledging "How beauty is excelled by manly grace / And wisdom, which alone is truly fair."

Eve immediately obeys an invisible voice, foreshadowing how she will later be swayed by Satan's suggestions. In Genesis, Eve is created out of Adam's rib, and is therefore less close to God than Adam is. Eve reflects Milton's (seemingly misogynistic) sentiments by admitting that she is inferior to Adam and submitting to his call.

Eve finishes her speech and she and Adam embrace and kiss. Satan looks away in envy but then is strengthened in his resolve, as it seems unfair that they should have such joy while he is condemned to Hell. He notes God's commandment against eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, and decides that this is his opportunity to corrupt Adam and Eve. If they can be persuaded to break God's rule for the sake of gaining knowledge or power, then they will surely fall. Satan then leaves Adam and Eve, deciding to hide himself and try to learn more information from other angels that might be about.

Milton portrays Adam and Eve's relationship as ideal love and marriage, where the woman submits to the man who loves and cares for her. The man communes directly with God, while the woman communes with God through the man. Satan devises the plan that becomes the central conflict of the book, and the "original sin" that causes the fall of humanity.

Meanwhile Uriel flies up to the stony gates of Eden where Gabriel, the chief angelic guard, sits watching other angels exercising at "heroic games." Uriel tells Gabriel about the spirit he let into Eden, and the shape-changing he witnessed. He suspects it might be one of the fallen angels. Gabriel promises to discover the spirit by morning if it is still in Eden. Uriel then returns to his post.

Even during peacetime, Milton's Heaven has a martial nature that emphasizes order and hierarchy above all else. The angels entertain themselves with "heroic games," and they are naturally arranged into orders of both proximity to God's light and military rank.

Evening comes to Eden and Adam and Eve retire to their leafy bower, as they must wake at dawn to work at pruning and manuring the garden. Their bower is covered with flowers of heavenly color and aroma. Before entering they pray to God, praising his glory and thanking him for their happiness. They then enter the bower and have sex.

Milton critiques the elaborate rituals of the Catholic and Anglican churches by showing Adam and Eve's worship as spontaneous and unstructured. Milton preferred a personal relationship with God and an independence of mind, rather than strict adherence to ritual and dogma.

Milton immediately defends this scene by declaring that Adam and Eve could have sex without sin, as the Fall had not corrupted their natures with lust yet. For them sex is a pure act of love, obeying God's command to populate the earth. Milton further states that only "our destroyer" would condemn sex as inherently evil.

Unlike most Puritans (and other Christians), Milton did not see sex as inherently sinful. Here he shows it as both pure and holy in its pre-Fallen state, a proper expression of marital love and due obedience to God's command to "be fruitful."

Night falls and Adam and Eve fall asleep, and Milton both blesses and laments their happy state, which will not last much longer. Meanwhile Gabriel sends his angels to scour Paradise and look for Satan. Two of them, Ithuriel and Zephon, find Satan in the shape of a toad, whispering evil thoughts into Eve's ear while she sleeps, hoping to corrupt her dreams. The angels catch Satan and force him to return to his true shape.

Milton follows the epic tradition by using "apostrophe" (breaking off the narrative to address someone or something in the second person). Satan assumes his lowliest shape yet, a toad, as he begins his attempts to corrupt Adam and Eve. He begins with Eve, the weaker of the two.

Ithuriel and Zephon don't recognize Satan at first, which wounds Satan's pride, and he mocks them as lesser angels. Zephon then scornfully tells Satan that his heavenly brightness has been so dimmed by evil that he is now unrecognizable. Satan hears this and sees the beauty of the unfallen angels and again laments his current state, but then he demands to be brought to their leader. The angels bring him to Gabriel.

Part of the nature and result of Satan's disobedience is his physical appearance. In God's hierarchy everything remains in its rightful position, never reaching too high or stooping too low. In changing shape and appearance Satan shows the effects of revolting against this order, but with this change comes a loss of power.

Gabriel recognizes Satan and confronts him, asking why he left Hell and entered Eden, and is now disturbing Eve's dreams. Satan first feigns innocence, claiming merely that he tried to lessen his pain by leaving Hell, but Gabriel asks why he came alone, implying that he was the first to flee pain of all the rebel angels. Satan's pride is stung and he describes the dangers he braved in flying through the abyss, hoping to find a new home on Earth.

Milton associates goodness with power, as Satan is immediately jealous of the unfallen angels and their brightness and strength. It is Satan's evil, not his defeat, that robs him of his greatness, as all life and brightness comes from God, and Satan separated himself from God with disobedience.

Gabriel calls Satan a liar and laments how far the once-great Archangel has fallen. He threatens to drag Satan back to Hell and seal him there. This enrages Satan, and he becomes huge and terrible in appearance. The angels turn "fiery red" and prepare for battle, which might have destroyed Paradise or even the whole mortal universe in its fierceness, but God halts the conflict by placing a sign of Golden Scales in the sky.

Gabriel seems to have greater "knowledge" of evil than Uriel, as he sees through Satan's lies and self-aggrandizement. The personification of the good angels allows Milton to add some conflict to the side of God's omnipotence, as the angels can be stung by Satan's insults or tricked by him in a way that God cannot.

Gabriel points to the Golden Scales, with which God ponders the outcomes of all events. On one side is the result of Satan staying and fighting, and on the other side is the result of Satan running away. The fighting side flies up, showing its emptiness and worthlessness, and Satan accepts this judgment as the truth. He recognizes that he could not be victorious, so he flies away.

The Scales symbolize God's supreme power over all the universe, including the lives of both Satan and Gabriel and all the actions occurring everywhere at once. Satan seems to recognize God's supremacy now, as he flees according to his inevitable fate. Once he tried to do battle with the omnipotent God, but now he only lashes out in spite against him – and even then he can only do harm when God allows it.

BOOK 5

The next morning Adam awakes from a restful sleep, but Eve seems disturbed and restless. She tells Adam that she has had troubling dreams, as it seems a voice was whispering to her in the night. In the dream she followed the voice, thinking it to be Adam's, and it led her to the Tree of Knowledge. There she saw a creature who looked like an angel, and he took a fruit from the Tree and ate it. The angel then praised the taste of the fruit and asked Eve to eat as well.

Eve's dream foreshadows the disobedience she will soon experience. In her innocent, ignorant state, she could not even have conceived of ideas like this without Satan's whispered suggestions. Again Eve follows and trusts a mysterious, invisible voice.

In the dream the angel told Eve that the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge would make her even happier, as she would be like "the gods," and he held out a sweet-smelling piece of the fruit. Eve seemed to eat it, but she did not actually experience the disobedient act in the dream. Immediately she flew up into the sky with the angel, but then he disappeared. She then woke up and was happy to discover that it was only a dream.

Eve still cannot conceive of the ultimate act of disobedience – Satan can only suggest eating the fruit; he cannot actually put the image in her mind. Satan does introduce some of the methods of his temptation, notably that if Eve eats the fruit she will be like "the gods" and lifted above her proper station.

Adam is troubled by this dream, and wonders where evil would come from in Eden, but he reassures Eve that she is still blameless for sinning in a dream, and that the dream does not necessarily predict the future. Eve still has her free will to be obedient in her waking life. Eve cries two tears but then is cheered by Adam's words, and they praise God spontaneously and profusely. They then go about their morning work tending to the garden, leading "the vine / To wed her elm."

Eve remains sinless, as the disobedience in her dream was entirely Satan's suggestion and she couldn't even imagine the physical eating of the fruit. In this book Milton begins to emphasize the free will Adam and Eve had, even as he also emphasizes the seeming inevitability of their fall. The work in the garden echoes the submission of female to male in Milton's hierarchy.

The scene shifts to Heaven, where God calls the Archangel Raphael and tells him that Satan has entered Paradise and is trying to corrupt Adam and Eve. God does not want to be blamed for leaving Adam and Eve ignorant about Satan and the consequences of disobedience, so he sends Raphael to speak with Adam and warn him about the tempter in Eden and remind him that he has free will. Thus God fulfills his obligation to his own Justice.

Milton heightens the paradox of free will versus predestination. He continues to foreshadow the Fall and show that it is inevitable, as God has already foreseen it, but at the same time he tries to show how much free will Adam and Eve actually have. Every Christian already knows the outcome of the "conflict," but Milton adds gravity to the single act of disobedience with all this preamble.

Raphael flies immediately from Heaven to Eden. When he lands he assumes his natural shape, a naked figure clothed in six beautiful wings. He then passes through the garden and Adam sees his approaching light. Adam tells Eve to set out all their best food and prepare for an honored guest. Eve prepares some delicious food and drink while Adam leaves the bower to meet Raphael. Adam bows and invites Raphael inside to stay until the day grows less hot.

Milton totally invents this meeting, as nowhere in the Bible are Adam and Eve warned about Satan. Milton adds these scenes to strengthen his argument for free will, going against what most of his Puritan compatriots believed. The warnings and "freedom" don't create suspense, as we already know the story's outcome, but they do heighten the tragedy of the Fall.

Raphael accepts, and the two enter the bower where Eve waits, naked and more beautiful than any of the ancient Greek goddesses, but still virtuous and innocent. Raphael greets her, blessing her womb which will give birth to all of humanity. They then sit down and eat, and Raphael discusses heavenly food and earthly food – though angels are pure spirit, they can also eat mortal food, transforming it like an alchemist turns iron to gold. Milton laments again the Paradise that has been lost, where humans and angels could eat together as friends.

With this invented scene Milton also builds up the glory of pre-Fallen man – Adam and Eve could eat and talk with an angel as if with a friend. He compares this to the current state of the world and laments everything that has been lost. Through Raphael Milton is also able discourse on various subjects, including his theories about the science of Heavenly substances and whether angels could partake in physical acts.

After the meal Adam wants to ask Raphael about heavenly knowledge, and he questions Raphael further about angels' food. Raphael answers by discussing the kinds of substances in God's creation. There are different levels in the hierarchy, with each higher form retaining the attributes of the substance below it – plants and inanimate objects have form but no physical senses, animals have physical senses, and humans have both physical senses and internal spirit, and so are the highest life forms on Earth. Raphael then warns that Adam and Eve must always use their spirit and reason to be obedient to God.

In adding so much to the Biblical account of the Fall Milton risks blasphemy, and indeed he recognizes his own soaring ambition. Milton does believe his poem to be divinely inspired though, just like the Bible, and he truly invokes the Holy Spirit to speak through him when he addresses the Muse throughout the poem. Milton expands on the hierarchy inherent in all of matter throughout the universe – everything is symmetrical and ordered in God's creation.

Adam asks why any being would choose to be disobedient to God, and Raphael tells Adam (Eve has possibly left the scene) that his happy state is not permanent, but depends on his own actions. Adam and Eve are created as perfect but still have free will, as God only wants love and praise that is freely given. Raphael mentions that some angels have refused to be obedient, and so have been cast from Heaven into Hell. Adam says he has heard rumors of this, but he asks Raphael to tell him the full story.

Adam is still mostly ignorant of even the concept of disobedience. Milton follows another epic tradition in beginning this long backstory through dialogue. Like other epics, he began "in media res" (in the middle of the action) to grab the reader's attention, and now he explains the context and history through a character's narration.

Raphael begins by explaining how difficult it is to describe heavenly things in earthly terms, but that he will give Adam more than his allotted knowledge if only to teach him the consequences of disobedience. He begins his story: When Heaven was still united and at peace, before God had created the mortal universe out of Chaos, God summoned all his angels to hear an announcement. Millions of angels gathered with their standards raised, and God declared that he had begotten a Son, who was from then on to rule at his right hand and as equal to God, "United as one individual soul."

Raphael's challenge in describing Heaven to Adam echoes Milton's own dilemma. The poet is trying to describe the Divine, the Heavenly, and the Unfallen in fallen, inherently corrupt language. This also relates to Milton's authority in describing such mysteries. Other then his belief in his own divine inspiration, Milton also intends an allegorical level to his tale, as his fallen language points to something purer and truer.

All the angels were pleased at this news except for one, one of the most powerful (if not the most powerful) Archangels, he who is now called Satan. That night during the heavenly twilight this Archangel could not sleep, for he was tormented by envy for the Son of God. The Archangel was proud and did not want to worship the Son, but felt that he himself deserved the same honor and power as God.

Milton departs from orthodox Christianity with this scene, where God "begets" the Son at a specific point in time. In the traditional doctrine of the Trinity, the Son is eternally begotten of the Father, as both of them exist outside time. Milton does not deny the Son's divinity, but he does stand by his own individual interpretation of Christian doctrine with this divergence.

That same night Satan spoke to his second-in-command (now called Beelzebub) and ordered him to assemble all the angels under their command. He ordered them to fly to their region of the North of Heaven, where Satan falsely said they would prepare to "receive our King / The great Messiah, and his new commands," as the Son had planned to survey Heaven and impose new laws. A third of the angels of Heaven went with Satan, trusting totally in his decrees, and they left that same night for the North.

Almost all the details of the war in Heaven are Milton's invention, but through Raphael's prologue he implies that the metaphorical truth is what is most important. He is trying to teach the reader about disobedience and Heavenly power, just as Raphael is trying to teach Adam.

God and his Son watched all this happen, though Satan thought he was being secret. God was pleased at this opportunity to display his omnipotence and bring glory to his Son, and the Son was also proud to show his new divine power to those who had doubted him. Meanwhile Satan and his millions, all arranged according to power and rank, travelled into the vast regions of the North, and Satan (who was then associated with Lucifer, the morning star) set up his own throne on a hill, in appearance a reflection of God's throne.

Satan's is the first sin of the universe, and it is the sin of pride – thinking himself equal to God – which basically equates to reaching above his place in the divine hierarchy. As in all the scenes in Heaven there is no real conflict, as God already knows about Satan's rebellion and how he will easily defeat it. Satan has often been associated with Lucifer, but this was originally just as symbol of his original brightness in Heaven.

Satan called his armies before him and delivered a speech, saying that they had been unjustly ruled by God, and now that they are supposed to also worship the Son the injustice is doubled. Satan proposed that they "cast off this yoke" and take up their own sovereignty, as they are all equals of God in freedom, if not in power, and so they should live rightfully free.

Satan presents his cause as the side of freedom in a twisted version of Milton's own political philosophy. Milton saw the monarchy in England as a tyranny unworthy of rule, but he saw God as the rightful monarch, and so Satan's rebellion is evil in that it goes against the order of Nature.

Satan was then interrupted by the angel Abdiel, who alone of all the legions objected to Satan's argument. Abdiel called Satan blasphemous, and affirmed that God was the rightful king of Heaven, as he created all the angels (including Satan) and set them in a proper hierarchy, with himself and his Son at the head. Abdiel begged that Satan and the other angels repent of their pride while they still could, but they refused.

Abdiel is the only dissenter to this argument, showing how easily Satan swayed millions of angels to his cause. Abdiel speaks with Milton's voice, trying to "justify God" even as Milton gives Satan a persuasive, dynamic argument.

Satan argued that he could not remember when he was created by God, so he must be self-created and "self-begot." Because of this he has as many rights as God himself, and deserves to try his strength against the throne of Heaven. All his followers applauded at this except for Abdiel, who cursed Satan and the other rebel angels and warned them to fear God's omnipotent power. The rebel angels mocked him but Abdiel endured their taunts and flew away, returning to the side of God.

This scene shows how Satan's reasoning has declined – originally he actually thought he was self-created and equal to God, and so his argument for freedom had more weight. By the time he is in Eden, however, Satan basically acknowledges God's total authority and omnipotence but still tries to spite him in any way he can.

BOOK 6

Raphael continues his tale of the war in Heaven. Abdiel returned to find that the good angels were already preparing for war, as God had seen everything and instructed them. God praised Abdiel for his faithfulness and obedience even in the face of persecution from the rebel angels. God appointed Michael the leader of the army of Heaven (which was fairly equal in number to Satan's army), with Gabriel as his second-in-command, and God instructed them to drive the rebel angels out of Heaven so that they fell into the abyss and their place of punishment.

This war in Heaven is generally meant as a lesson for the internal war that will soon come to Adam and Eve. God could easily defeat Satan in an instant, but he allows his angels to fight for him, perhaps to prove their obedience, or else simply so Milton has something dramatic to describe. This battle will echo the great wars of the Iliad *or* Aeneid.

The army of Heaven then flew off to battle arranged in perfect ranks, and they met Satan's army, and the two sides lined up and faced each other. Raphael comments on how strange it was for angels to be fighting angels, as they are both children of the same God. Satan came forward in a golden chariot made to look like God's throne. Abdiel could not endure the sight of his blasphemy, so he confronted Satan.

Heaven's army is defined by its order and strict adherence to rank. The good angels remain good because they accept their place in the divine order. Satan already begins setting himself up as a reflection of God, but he cannot create new things himself – he can only copy and pervert what God has already created.

Abdiel condemned Satan for his disobedience and defiance of omnipotence, and Satan responded with insults of Abdiel's cowardice and vanity. Satan also mocked all the good angels, claiming that they defended "servility" against his "freedom." Abdiel countered that to serve God is the way of Nature, as in the natural hierarchy God is monarch. Abdiel then stepped forward and struck at Satan, who was knocked backwards.

This is a condensation of Milton's thoughts on the theme of order and hierarchy, and also an echo of what seems to be the poet's own inner contradictions. Milton, like Satan, felt restricted by monarchies he felt were illegitimate, but unlike Satan, Milton tried to recognize the divine order in Nature, in which God is the rightful monarch of all.

At this the battle began, and the rebel angels surged forward as Michael blew his trumpet. The battle raged on evenly for a long time, creating great chaos and destruction in Heaven, but not as much as might have occurred had not God limited the strength of each angel and arranged their strategies of battle. Finally Satan fought his way through to Michael.

The war is huger and more glorious than any of those in the classical epics, but there is very little actual drama as the angels do battle, as they only act as God allows them to, and none of them can be killed.

Before engaging each other Michael and Satan traded insults, with Michael promising to banish Satan to Hell and Satan to "turn this Heav'n itself into the Hell / Thou fablest" if he could not be victorious. Then they began to fight, both of them glorious and powerful like "Two planets" colliding, until Michael struck Satan with his sword, which was specially tempered by God himself. The sword sheared off Satan's entire right side, so that he knew the horror of pain for the first time.

Satan's disobedience causes him to lose his power and allows him to feel pain, but he still cannot be killed without God specifically annihilating him. The violence and spectacle without any real stakes makes the angelic battle seem extravagant and almost cartoonish.

Satan bled "nectarous humour" from his wound, and the rebel angels protected him from Michael until he healed, which happened quickly "for Spirits that live throughout / Vital in every part" cannot be killed except by "annihilation." Other great deeds were done on the battlefield, like Gabriel cutting Moloch in half, but after Satan's defeat the rebel army retreated with their wounded leader. The rebel angels had never experienced pain before until now, and they began to understand the consequences of their disobedience. The good angels flew off in a cube formation.

The cube is a symbol of divine order and perfection, as the good angels successfully defend God's hierarchy. Milton expounds on his theories of angelic bodies – angels are constructed of spiritual substance and can bleed this heavenly "quintessence," but they still cannot be totally killed by any injury. Again goodness is associated with power, as the rebels are easily defeated.

Night fell and both armies rested and regrouped. Satan, already healed, gathered his army for a council. He encouraged them with their realization that though they can experience pain, they are "Incapable of mortal injury," and so could potentially keep fighting forever. He then proposed they return to the second day of battle with better weapons, and perhaps overcome the stronger good angels with cleverness.

Satan already revises his position as he realizes that he is not as strong as he thought – the rebels are not even fighting all of Heaven's army, but only a number equal to their own. Satan seems to accept that he cannot defeat God with his own strength, but he is already resolved to keep fighting and hurt God however he can.

Nisroch, the chief of the "Principalities" (a rank of angel) proposed that they invent a device to cause the good angels pain, as pain is "perfect misery, the worst / Of evils." Satan answered with an idea of mining "materials dark and crude" from under the ground, which when lit with fire would explode. He proceeded to invent gunpowder and the cannon, and the rebel angels then spent the rest of the night constructing cannons.

Milton's description of the war between the angels does not reflect warfare of his time, but instead the kinds of battles of the Iliad *or* Aeneid, *with armies lining up to face each other and heroes making long speeches. Milton then adds this seemingly anachronistic detail of cannons, which were by Milton's time a common sight on the battlefield.*

The next morning the armies faced off again, and Satan revealed his cannons with a sarcastic speech about sending "proposals" of peace. The good angels were confused at the sight of the "devilish enginery," but then the rebels fired the cannons and caused great injury. The good angels' armor hindered their speed so they were unable to escape the cannonballs, but they, like the rebels, could not be killed.

Milton portrays gunpowder as a devilish invention in a very specific critique of the technology of warfare. Milton even warned against seeking "forbidden knowledge" about the cosmos, so he is especially opposed to scientific "advancements" in the mass murder of humans.

Satan and Belial then made more sarcastic, punning speeches, feeling assured of victory, until the good angels grew wrathful and started ripping up hills and throwing them at the rebel army, burying the cannons. Again the rebels experienced pain and felt their optimism wane, but they fought back. There would have been even more damage done to Heaven had not God then sent his Son to end the conflict and prove himself as worthy of deity.

The battle takes on an even more ridiculous quality as the angels throw hills at each other, but still none of them can be killed and God only allows as much damage as he decides is proper. The outcome of the conflict has never been in doubt, as the all-powerful God hasn't even entered the battle yet.

The Son put on all the armor and power of God and rode forth in the divine chariot. Michael immediately drew the Heavenly army back and the Son rode ahead alone. The rebel angels tried to fight him but he drove them back easily with "ten thousand thunders" in his right hand, and the rebels fled in terror. The son drove them like "a herd / Of goats" all the way to the crystal border of Heaven. Before the rebels opened a hole into the abyss, but this was less terrifying than the Son's wrath behind them, so Satan and his followers flung themselves into the pit.

Milton devotes a lot of description to the Son's glorious armor and frightening appearance, but it only serves to highlight the one-sidedness of the conflict – the Son has no real need of armor and weapons, as he easily defeats the rebels. One of Milton's poetic inventions is that the rebels were not literally thrown from Heaven, but instead chose to jump into the abyss instead of face the Son.

Satan and his angels fell for nine days, at last landing in Hell, where they now dwell in darkness and fire. The "Messiah" Son returned to his army in glory, and all the angels praised and worshipped him. The Son re-ascended to God's throne and sat down at the right hand of his Father. Raphael says again that he has tried to tell this tale in earthly terms so that Adam could understand, and he hopes that Adam now realizes who his enemy is – none other than Satan himself, who is now trying to have revenge against God. Raphael hopes Adam will learn from Satan's example and so "fear to transgress" against God.

The Son's victory is basically a restoration of order to Heaven. After all the activity and chaos of the battle, the Son re-ascends to his throne and the angels return to singing praises – everything goes back to normal. Raphael's long and extravagant description echoes Milton's, as Milton uses the war in Heaven as a lesson about disobedience and the dangers of Satan's trickery.

BOOK 7

Milton again invokes a muse, but this time he specifically summons Urania, the Greek Muse of Astronomy. Milton then conflates her with the Holy Spirit, saying that she is not "Of old Olympus… but Heav'nly born." Milton asks her to protect him from the many wrong beliefs of those around him, and to inspire him to tell the pure truth.

Milton reaffirms his fusion of classical tradition with Christian belief. By conflating Urania with the Holy Spirit, he implies that Greek and Roman civilization was indeed great and worthy of study, but mistaken in terms of religious truth. Milton then "corrects" the ancients with his Christian doctrine, while still following their epic tradition.

The scene returns to Eden, where Adam thanks Raphael for his tale. Adam wants to know more, however, so he asks Raphael about when, how, and why the world was created. He wants to keep Raphael there as long as he can so as to ask him more questions, but Adam also asks if he is crossing any boundaries of divine knowledge by being so curious.

While the forbidden fruit symbolizes the dangers of forbidden knowledge, this long conversation and Adam's innocent curiosity show the importance Milton placed on proper knowledge, conversation, and contemplation.

Raphael assures Adam that the story of creation is not a secret from humans, as it will help Adam further glorify God. Raphael does warn Adam that the "appetite" for knowledge requires temperance, but then he begins his story: After the Son drove Satan and his angels from Heaven, God decided to create a new race of creatures and a new world. This was partly to heal the memory of the war and rebellion, but also to refill the ranks of his worshippers after Satan "dispeopled Heav'n," and to make sure Satan could not take pleasure in diminishing God's creation.

Instead of the constant action and warfare of the classical epics, Paradise Lost *is mostly filled with dialogue and interior monologues, as Milton felt that knowledge, contemplation, and quiet obedience to God was just as important and heroic as any war. Raphael associates Adam's growing desire for knowledge with a physical "appetite," foreshadowing the eating of the forbidden fruit.*

In describing this new race, God said that they would not dwell in Heaven until they had proved themselves "by degrees of merit," but that then he will unite Earth with Heaven into one glorious kingdom. God created through his Son, and sent along his Spirit to describe the bounds of Chaos. Raphael says the creation took place immediately, as all God's acts do, but it can only be told as "earthly notion can receive" as occurring over six days.

This scene implies that God partly created humans to spite Satan, or to at least undo the damage Satan did to his number of worshippers. God also undercuts the "fortunate fall" theory that existed during Milton's time—that the Fall brought about greater goodness than would have come to Unfallen humanity. God still planned on eventually elevating humans to Heaven even if they remained obedient.

After God's announcement the angels all praised him for bringing "Good out of evil." The Son then emerged from Heaven's gates to perform the actual creation, his chariot surrounded by angels arranged by rank – Cherubim, Seraphim, Potentates, Thrones, and Virtues. The Son came to the edge of the abyss and circumscribed the bounds of the new universe, and then formed the Earth out of Chaos. The Son then said "Let there be light," and divided the Earth into night and day, and so the "first day" of creation passed, and all the angels sang praises.

Milton expands on the Biblical account of creation here while taking many phrases exactly from Genesis to give his tale greater credibility. One of Milton's departures is having the Son create the universe instead of the Father, as in Genesis there was not yet a concept of the Christian Trinity. Milton also tries to resolve the Biblical self-contradiction of how there were "days" of creation before there was even a sun.

The Son (now referred to as God) divided the land from the water on the second day, and on the third day he created oceans, rivers, and plants, and sent rain to make the plants grow. On the fourth day he created the sun, moon, and stars, and arranged them by rank and glory. On the fifth day he created fish, birds, and all the other creatures of the sea. On the sixth day God made all the beasts of dry land. They sprang up in pairs fully grown, all at peace with each other, but none having names.

By having the Son create the universe, Milton expands on his idea that though the Son and the Father are of one essence, the Son is the more active aspect of God – it is the Son who defeats Satan, creates the universe, punishes Adam and Eve, and then becomes incarnate as a man. Everything in the original, perfect creation is properly ordered and ranked.

God then created his "master work," a creature who stood upright and had the "sanctity of reason," one who could govern all the other plants and animals and could give thanks to his Maker. God and the Son created this first Man together, making him in their own image out of dust and then breathing life into him. They then created a woman, and commanded the pair to "Be fruitful… and fill the earth." God gave all creation for these humans to govern, except he forbade them from eating of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, for if they did so they would discover Sin and Death.

Throughout the poem Milton connects "uprightness" with goodness, as humans are the only creatures to walk upright and also the only creatures given reason and knowledge of God. In the original Paradise humans had dominion over the animals, who all acted friendly and tame. God's command to "be fruitful" becomes Milton's justification for placing innocent sex in unfallen Eden. This scene is taken almost entirely from Genesis.

The Son then surveyed his work, saw that it was "entirely good," and returned to Heaven, hanging the mortal universe directly beneath Heaven so that angels could easily commune back and forth. God rested on the "seventh day" while angels praised him and his new creation, and this day became known as the Sabbath. Raphael finishes by asking if Adam wants any other knowledge that is within his bounds.

Milton uses his poetic powers to emphasize the beauty and goodness of the original creation, where angels and humans were close together and could commune regularly. The general order of the universe is now established – Heaven above, Earth below, and Hell below that.

BOOK 8

Adam stands for a moment in wonder at the story of creation, but then he asks Raphael about the movements of the stars and planets, the relative size of the Earth, and why God created such huge heavenly bodies to serve the smaller Earth (if they indeed rotate around the Earth as they seem to). At this Eve decides to leave the conversation and tend to her flowers. She doesn't leave because she is bored or incapable of understanding such concepts, but because she would rather hear about them from Adam later, when "conjugal carresses" might sometimes interrupt the discussion.

Adam's desire for knowledge grows over the course of this single conversation, as his "appetite" increases and leans towards knowledge above his station. Milton returns to his ideas about the inequality of women, as Eve "submits" to Adam by leaving the intellectual discussion to him, even though she has the capacity to understand it. Eve recognizes her order in creation and that she is lower ranked than Adam.

Raphael responds to Adam by saying that size does not necessarily mean importance when it comes to heavenly bodies, and that God has concealed his designs regarding the movements of the orbs. Raphael does not answer whether the Earth moves around the sun or the sun moves around the Earth, but only says that it should not matter to Adam, who is not meant to know everything about God's creation. Adam and Eve should "Dream not of other worlds" but leave heavenly matters to God. Raphael finishes with a warning that Adam should be content with the knowledge God has revealed and not seek to pass its boundaries.

Milton comments on the conflicting scientific theories of his day – the Copernican theory that the earth rotated around the sun (supported by Galileo, Milton's contemporary), and the traditional Ptolemaic (and Catholic) idea that the sun rotated around the earth. Milton refuses to side with one theory over the other, basically saying that it doesn't matter – scientists shouldn't seek knowledge too high above their station, but should content themselves with obedience and self-knowledge.

Adam thanks Raphael for satisfying his curiosity and warning him about "wand'ring thoughts, and notions vain." Adam then offers to relate what he remembers about his own creation, as he enjoys Raphael's company and wants to detain him as long as possible. Raphael says he would like to hear the story, as he was absent on the day of Adam's creation. He was busy on an errand from God, checking that the gates of Hell remained closed, so that no devils could escape and anger God, causing him to mix "Destruction with Creation."

Raphael relates Milton's warning about the "mazes" of philosophy and speculation, which can distract from knowledge of God and an obedient life. Raphael's words don't reflect well on God, as they imply that God would allow his anger at Satan to corrupt or destroy his own creation. This seems to undercut both omnipotence and goodness, but also looks forward to the Flood of Noah.

Adam begins his story: he awoke sweating in the sunlight and immediately looked up to heaven, and then walked about exploring the plants and animals that surrounded him. He then tried to speak and discovered that he naturally knew the names of everything he saw, and so he named the geographical features around him. He then immediately grew curious about his Maker, and how he might praise him.

Adam's creation story is different from Eve's, and shows how he is both superior and closer to God in Milton's view. Adam wakes up in the sunlight instead of the shade, and he immediately knows the true names of things, instead of being distracted by reflections like Eve was.

Adam was then visited by a vision of God, who explained how and why he was created and gave him dominion over Eden and all its plants and animals. God only forbade one thing: Adam was not to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, or else he should lose his "happy state" and be "expelled from hence into a world / Of woe and sorrow." God then brought all the animals of Earth before Adam, two at a time, and Adam gave them all names, as he had this sudden knowledge from God.

God appears to Adam in a vision and presence instead of just a voice, confirming that Adam is to commune directly with God, while Eve is to commune with God through Adam. Adam's first quality is the divine knowledge God gives him, so that he can name all the animals. This shows that knowledge is important and even holy, as long as it is knowledge that God approves of and that befits one's station.

After seeing all the pairs of animals Adam realized that he himself had no companion, and none of the animals shared his gifts of speech and reason. He asked God for a companion, as he longed to share his thoughts with someone else and he recognized that he was inferior to God, and so not whole and self-sufficient as a single being. God was pleased with this request, saying it is "not good for man to be alone," and he put Adam into a mysterious sleep. While he slept God removed one of Adam's ribs, healed the wound, and then created Eve from the rib. Adam's mind remained aware of what was happening even as he slept, so he could remember this creation.

The pairs of animals foreshadows the pairs Noah will later take into the ark, though this first occasion is more joyous and pure. Adam recognizes his own nature as deficient to God, so Adam sees that he cannot be whole and happy alone like God is. Eve is again shown as a sort of derivative of Adam, created from his rib instead of directly in God's image.

Adam was immediately intrigued by Eve's beauty and how different she seemed to him, and he instantly fell in love with her. She disappeared at first, and Adam woke up to search for her. Then she came to him, led on by God's voice. Adam immediately thanked God for Eve's creation and announced that she would be his wife, "one flesh, one heart, one soul." Eve heard this and then turned away from Adam, but this only made her seem more attractive, as one "That would be wooed." She then yielded and Adam led her to his bower, where they had innocent sex for the first time.

Adam has heard Eve's account – that she first turned away from him because he seemed less beautiful than her reflection – but Adam still believes that Eve turned away so as to seem more attractive to him (whether of her own accord or God's). Adam immediately falls in love, and he seems more smitten than Eve is, which foreshadows his weakness concerning her beauty.

In describing this conjugal bliss, Adam fears that he is too strongly attracted to Eve's physical beauty. He knows that she is his inferior in mind and soul, but when he is in her presence Eve "Seems wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best." Raphael grows slightly concerned at this, and warns Adam to be temperate in his "carnal pleasure," and to focus on a pure love between his own soul and Eve's, in which Adam is the "head" and she submits to him, as he is indeed her superior in all but beauty.

While Eve's original sin will be eating the forbidden fruit to gain knowledge and power, Adam's sin will be choosing Eve over God. Even in his innocent state Adam shows a weakness for Eve's beauty. Raphael sees the warning signs in this, as it represents a disruption of proper hierarchy – man elevating woman above her proper station, above God.

Adam is "half abashed" at this warning, but he continues praising Eve and their marital harmony, and he assures Raphael that his physical attraction to Eve comes from their deeper unity of mind and soul. Adam then asks Raphael whether angels express their love as humans do. Raphael seems to blush and says that angels do indeed express love, but as they are pure spirit they need not be divided by flesh and bone, and so can be wholly united when they "embrace."

Despite Adam's extreme love of Eve's physical beauty, Milton still paints their pre-Fallen relationship as an ideal sort of marriage. Milton expands more on his theories about angels, inventing a sort of "Heavenly sex" where angels can physically express love without the boundaries of flesh.

Raphael then says that he must go, as the sun is setting, and as he leaves he again warns Adam to love God before Eve, and for both of them to remain obedient to God and avoid temptation. Adam thanks Raphael for his company and "condescension," and then he returns to his bower while Raphael flies back up to Heaven.

"Condescension" originally did not have its modern negative connotations – it meant to put aside one's dignity and rank to become equal with one's inferior. Raphael's warning leaves Adam armed with knowledge about Satan, but the outcome of the poem is still assured.

BOOK 9

Milton says that unfortunately he can no longer talk about friendly discussions between humans and heavenly beings, but must now turn to the inevitable tragedy of his tale – Adam and Eve's disobedience and the Fall of Man. Though his story is sad, Milton declares that it is more heroic than the epic tales of Homer or Virgil because it deals with morality, not just physical strength. He invokes the Muse again, his "celestial patroness," though in the third person this time instead of directly. Milton hopes she will visit him in his sleep and inspire him, as he worries he began this task too late in life and cannot finish it alone.

Milton now places his epic within the tradition of tragedy, as it involves the fall of a great man through some special flaw. Milton both reaffirms his ability and speaks with appropriate Christian humility, mentioning his old age and asking the Holy Spirit to finish the poem through him. The Fall of Man will be the tragic climax of the poem, but there is no suspense about its outcome whatsoever, as it has been foretold from the start and is part of Christian doctrine.

Milton also asks the Muse to keep him from being distracted by vain descriptions of "long and tedious havoc" (battles), as Homer and Virgil did in their epics. He wants to finish his divine task before he gets too old or the world starts decaying with "cold / Climate." The scene then turns to Satan, who has been hiding on the dark side of the Earth for seven days after being banished by Gabriel. On the eighth day Satan returns to Eden disguised as a mist, following the Tigris River and rising up in the fountain next to the Tree of Life.

Milton mocks the more tedious parts of the classical epics and the knightly romances of the Middle Ages. For him, the ultimate hero is not measured in physical strength but in moral power. Milton has already described the extravagant war in Heaven, but in the end it was more about obedience and revolt than feats of martial prowess. God again allows Satan to enter Eden undeterred.

Satan studies all the creatures of Eden, considering which one he should disguise himself in, and finally he settles on the snake for its "wit and native subtlety." Before continuing with his plan Satan hesitates, grieving what might have been. He decides that Earth is more beautiful than Heaven ever was, but as he praises its glory he laments how he cannot take any joy in this wondrous new creation. Adam and Eve's happiness only causes him greater anguish.

In the actual account in Genesis, Satan is never mentioned, and it is merely the clever serpent who tempts Eve. It is only Christian doctrine that later associates Satan with the serpent. Satan's reasoning continues to degrade, making his arguments more difficult to follow but also more tragic, as he has lost everything except hate.

Satan finally controls his thoughts and reaffirms his purpose to bring evil out of God's good, and in one day to mar what took it six days for God to create. In this way Satan hopes to have revenge on God, who he assumes created humans to "repair his numbers" and to spite Satan, by corrupting humans so they become Hell's instead of "Heav'nly spoils."

Satan now recognizes that it would have been better to remain good, but he still clings to his despair and is unwilling to repent. God did indeed create humans partly to spite Satan and repair his number of worshippers, so in a way Satan had that small victory.

Satan further laments how far he has fallen, from the highest Archangel to the "mazy folds" and "bestial slime" of a serpent, but he accepts that he must deal with lowly things first if he is to fulfill his lofty ambitions. He then creeps along like a "black mist" until he finds a sleeping snake and possesses its body, which is curled up upon itself like a labyrinth.

Satan has totally devolved in his transformations by now – beginning as the brightest Archangel, then a dark, terrible warrior, then a cherub, then a cormorant, toad, mist, and serpent. The image of the maze returns as a negative image of forbidden knowledge, which leads one to become lost. The snake's labyrinthine body thus becomes a living symbol of devilish complexity.

The next morning Adam and Eve wake up and give their usual spontaneous praise to God. Then Eve proposes that she and Adam work separately instead of together as she usually do, as she hopes to get more work done this way. Adam doesn't approve of this idea, as he worries that the two will be more susceptible to Satan's temptation if they are alone, and in times of danger the woman's place is "by her husband." He also assures Eve that their labor is not a strict necessity, as there is no way they could complete all of it until they have children to help them.

Eve's first mistake, which leads to her eventual temptation and fall, is trying to change the natural order by working separately without Adam. As the "inferior" of the two, she should submit to her husband's wishes and stay by his side in times of danger, but she wishes to prove herself worthy. Milton again associates natural procreation with the innocence of Eden.

Eve responds that she "overheard" Raphael's warning about Satan, but she wishes to prove herself should Satan attack her alone. She also recognizes that she and Adam are "not capable of death or pain," and so have little to fear. Adam again tries to dissuade her, saying that if they are together he will be able to protect her from Satan, who is surely very clever, and that in her presence Adam feels even "More wise, more watchful, stronger" than usual.

Eve's attempts to prove herself are not sinful, but any misstep in the divine hierarchy can lead to greater sin. Milton's argument here is that in a proper marriage men and women should complement each other and be stronger together than apart, with the husband leading but being strengthened by his wife's presence.

Eve is slightly put out by this, and argues that if they defend themselves against Satan alone, they will gain "double honour," and that surely God would not make their happiness so fragile as to depend on them always being together. Adam responds, calling Eve "O woman" and reminding her of their free will, which allows them to ruin Paradise on their own. He also warns her of Satan's wiles, and how he might deceive her into disobedience without her even realizing it, but finally Adam relents.

Adam reminds Eve of her secondary place in the proper order of nature, and again Milton reiterates the supreme freedom of Adam and Eve's will even as the Fall approaches. Adam's mistake is giving in to his weakness regarding Eve's physical beauty, and allowing her to sway him against his better nature.

Eve replies that the proud Satan will surely seek out Adam first, so she is in little danger. Then she departs from Adam to her own "groves," looking more beautiful than any Greek goddess. As she leaves Adam asks her to return at noon for their meal, and then Milton laments that never again will the two have "sweet repast" in Paradise again.

Milton breaks in again to emphasize the acuteness of the tragedy that is about to occur. He restates all the beauty and innocence of Paradise before it is snatched away by one act of disobedience.

Meanwhile Satan has been seeking out the pair, hoping but not expecting to find them separated. He is then delighted to see Eve by herself, tending to her flowers. Satan is momentarily stunned by her beauty and innocence, but then "the hot Hell that always in him burns" reminds him of his hate. Satan (within the serpent) coils himself elaborately and seems to stand upright in a "surging maze," lifting his "head / Crested aloft" to get Eve's attention.

Milton portrays the pre-Fall serpent as a magnificent animal with a crest on its head and the ability to lift itself upright. Again this physical verticality symbolizes moral righteousness, as the serpent is still a sinless beast before the Fall. Satan makes himself a beautiful physical spectacle, knowing that Eve is easily diverted by vain appearances.

When Eve notices him Satan speaks to her, praising her beauty and grace and calling her a "goddess amongst gods." Eve is amazed that the serpent can speak now, as she thought none of Eden's creatures could talk except for she and Adam, and she asks how this came to be. Satan explains that he found a tree with beautiful, delicious apples, and when he ate the fruit he suddenly found himself with the ability to speak and with an expanded intellect, able to perceive both heavenly and earthly knowledge. He says the apples also made him seek out Eve so that he could give her the praise and worship she deserves.

Satan uses flattery to initially win over Eve, showing how "inferior" she is by giving such weight to superficial things like beauty. Eve did not receive Raphael's full message about the dangers of forbidden knowledge, so she is susceptible to Satan's argument that all knowledge is inherently good. Milton approves of knowledge, but only when it is made subject to obedience.

Eve is amazed at this, and though she says the snake is "overpraising" her, she asks him where this tree grows. Satan offers to show her, and Eve follows him the short distance to the Tree of Knowledge. When Eve sees the Tree she says the journey was "Fruitless," as she has been forbidden by God from eating its fruit. Satan asks about this commandment, and Eve reaffirms that she and Adam can eat the fruit of any tree except that of the Tree of Knowledge, or else they will die.

Eve is initially armed with repeated obedience, but she has overestimated her own strength in asking to work separately from Adam. She recognizes that the snake is praising her more than is proper by calling her a "goddess," but she does not stop his flattery. It is implied that these compliments make her more sympathetic to Satan's arguments.

Satan raises himself up like "some orator renowned / In Athens or free Rome" and then says that the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge has revealed to him that God actually *wants* Eve to disobey him, as this will prove her independence and "dauntless virtue" in braving death. Satan says that he himself has proved that the fruit does not bring death, as he ate of it and still lives. Satan also argues that it would be unjust for God to punish Eve for such a small thing, and if he is not just then he is not worthy of being God.

Satan uses several arguments that seem persuasive on their own, yet are contradictory when taken together, and Eve shows her inferior intellect by being persuaded by them. In this Milton's portrayal of women grows even more harsh. Milton expands on the Biblical account by having the serpent claim to have already eaten the fruit – in Genesis the serpent just tells Eve the fruit will make her more godlike.

Satan further says that God has forbidden the fruit so as to keep Adam and Eve "low and ignorant" instead of assuming their proper places as gods. If he, a serpent, achieved speech and intelligence from eating the fruit, then surely Eve will become a goddess if she eats it. Satan says there is no sin in desiring knowledge and wisdom, so Eve should "reach then, and freely taste."

Satan's argument basically returns to his original speech convincing his angels to rebel – Eve is rightfully a goddess, and she should not have to submit to God simply based on his arbitrary commandment. This argument seems like it would be unappealing to the relatively ignorant, unambitious Eve, but when combined with the earlier flattery and barrage of arguments, it wins her over.

Eve looks at the fruit, which seems especially perfect and delicious to her, and she thinks about Satan's persuasive words. She muses that the fruit must be very powerful if God has forbidden it, and if the serpent has truly eaten it then she doesn't need to fear dying. It seems wrong that such magical fruit would be denied to humans if beasts are allowed to eat it. Finally "in evil hour" she reaches for a peace of fruit, picks it, and takes a bite. At that moment "Earth felt the wound" and Nature sighs sorrowfully, knowing that "all was lost."

This small, single act is the "Fall of Man" which brings all death and suffering into the world. Taken by itself this seems cruel and unfair, but Milton adds so much gravity to the act by including the earlier war in Heaven, Raphael's warnings, and the approach of Sin and Death, that the action becomes much more than just biting into a fruit. Even so, the great question of the poem remains if Milton "justifies" God's extreme punishment of this single disobedient act.

Satan immediately slinks back into the undergrowth. Eve is overcome by the delicious fruit and she gluttonously eats many pieces of it, not realizing she is "eating death." She then praises the Tree of Knowledge and muses on whether she should let Adam eat the fruit or not – if he doesn't, then she might finally be "more equal" with him, but then she reasons that if she is going to die because of this, then Adam would be "wedded to another Eve," which she could not bear. She resolves to give him the fruit as well, as she loves him and wants to share everything with him, whether life or death.

At first the Tree does not bring feelings of guilt and sin, so Eve is convinced she has made the right decision. Her character grows even more negative as her first thought after eating the fruit is leading Adam also into her disobedience. Her temptation of Adam brings up another traditional aspect of the Fall – love and sexuality. The couple choose each other over God in a perversion of the hierarchy of love, in which love of God should come first.

Eve bows to the Tree of Knowledge and then goes to find Adam, who has been weaving a wreath of flowers to give to Eve. Adam meets her and sees the forbidden fruit in her hand, and Eve hurriedly explains that the serpent ate it and learned to speak, and so convinced her to try it as well. She has eaten it and her eyes have been opened, and she is "growing up to godhead," and now she wants Adam to try it so that they might be together in "equal joy, as equal love."

Adam, still innocent and unfallen, has been making a wreath out of his pure (but over-extravagant) love of Eve. This wreath, the last image of their unfallen relationship and the idea of marriage as God intended it, falls symbolically to the ground. Eve repeats Satan's arguments, feeling that she has moved above her station in God's order and is becoming a goddess herself.

As soon as Adam hears this he drops the garland of flowers, which "all the faded roses shed," and he stands there speechless and pale. He is horrified that Eve has succumbed to temptation, and he realizes that all is lost, but then Adam immediately decides that he cannot live without Eve, as no new unfallen woman could replace her. He knows he will be dooming himself by eating the fruit, but reasons that surely God would not destroy them or punish them too harshly. Eve is delighted at his faithful love and she embraces him, and then Adam eats the forbidden fruit, "fondly overcome with female charm."

The faded roses of the wreath become the first thing to wilt and decay in Paradise. Adam's sin is not trying to gain forbidden knowledge or move beyond his rank, but placing his love for Eve above his love for God, which is again upsetting God's proper order. Milton portrays the unfallen couple as having innocent flaws (Adam as over-curious and attracted to Eve's beauty, Eve as distracted by appearances and wanting to prove herself) and then shows how these flaws can lead to fully-fledged sin in the right situation.

Nature groans again and the sky weeps a few drops of rain, but Adam feels immediately invigorated and more godlike. He then looks at Eve and is filled with lust, and he praises her for choosing this "delightful fruit." Then he and Eve run off to a "shady bank" and have sex. Afterward they fall asleep briefly, and when they wake up their minds are in turmoil and they recognize that they have fallen.

Adam and Eve's sexuality is usually associated with the Fall, and though Milton portrayed them as sexual even in their innocence, now lust is introduced to the world and sexuality becomes more of a sinful act (associated with darkness, in a "shady bank") than a pure expression of love and procreation.

Adam regrets aloud that Eve ate the forbidden fruit, as he sees now that instead of gaining divine knowledge of good and evil, they have only gained knowledge of "good lost, and evil got." Adam laments that he will never be able to look at God or an angel again without shame. The two are suddenly aware of their nakedness, and they feel ashamed, so they cover themselves with fig leaves roughly sewn together, and lose "that first naked glory."

This shame at being naked is taken directly from Genesis, as everything about humanity begins to be corrupted into its current state. The couple now realize the point Milton has been trying to prove – knowledge is important, but not all knowledge leads to good, especially when it involves being disobedient to God and disrupting his order.

Adam and Eve sit down and start to weep, and then the emotions of sin come to them and they are filled with "anger, hate, / Mistrust, suspicion, discord," and lust, and they start to argue. Adam blames Eve for wanting to work separately, and Eve says that the serpent would surely have tempted Adam as well if he had been there. She says Adam should have been firmer with her, which makes Adam angrier, and he calls her ungrateful, reminding her that he ate the forbidden fruit just so they could be together. He curses himself for listening to her and trusting her, and promises to not trust a woman again. The two keep arguing for hours.

One of the immediate effects of sin is for Adam and Eve to blame each other and the serpent. This then becomes the first real argument on Earth, and the beginning of the corruption of the inner lives of all people. Milton's own arguments against women come through in Adam's bitter outbursts, and indeed the Eve Milton portrays is generally a weak woman who brings harm to others and then blames them for it. Tragically, Adam ate the fruit out of love for Eve, but his disobedience causes him to fall out of "true love" with her.

BOOK 10

Back in Heaven, God immediately knows when Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit. The angelic guards of Eden also know, and they fly up to Heaven to ask God how Satan re-entered Paradise, as they guarded it as best they could. God tells them that they are not to blame, as he himself allowed Satan to return, unwilling to affect Adam and Eve's free will by protecting them from temptation. God then sends the Son down as "Man's friend, his Mediator," and his "Redeemer," to pass judgment on the couple.

God basically admits that he sends his angels on purposeless errands, as he assigned them to "guard" Eden and then actively allowed Satan to slip past them. Because he is all-powerful, anything God sends an angel to do instead of doing himself is basically a test of obedience. The Son again appears as the active nature of God and the friend of humanity.

The Son reminds God that whatever judgment he passes will later fall on himself, as he has already volunteered to suffer on humanity's behalf. The Son then rises from his throne and immediately enters Paradise, as "the speed of Gods / Time counts not." The Son walks through the garden and calls for Adam, but the couple hide themselves in the trees.

Milton earlier described how swiftly Raphael flew to Earth, but the Son exists outside of time and so immediately arrives wherever he wants to be. Milton's "justification" of God now starts coming into play, as God must weigh both his own justice and mercy in punishing Adam and Eve.

The Son calls again and then Adam and Eve emerge looking guilty, angry, and ashamed. Adam says he hid because he was embarrassed of his nakedness, and the Son asks if he ate the fruit of the forbidden tree. Adam says that Eve gave him the fruit to eat, and as she had been given to Adam by God he couldn't suspect her of sinning. The Son immediately rebukes Adam, asking if Eve is his God now that he should obey her instead of God, and allow her attractiveness to sway Adam's superior wisdom and intellect.

Much of this scene is taken from Genesis, though Adam lengthens his speech a little, almost blaming God for giving him the sinful Eve. The Son sees the nature of Adam's "original sin" – the important thing was not the eating of the fruit itself, but the disobedience to God and Adam placing Eve's love above God's love.

The Son then asks Eve to explain herself, and Eve says that the serpent tricked her into eating the fruit. The Son (now referred to as God) immediately condemns the serpent to forever crawl on its belly as a punishment for being the vehicle of Satan. He ordains that Adam and Eve's offspring will bruise the serpent's head, and the serpent will bite their heel. Milton then references the eventual fulfillment of this prophecy, when Jesus "son of Mary second Eve" will defeat Satan, delivering the serpent his last "fatal bruise."

The serpent is robbed of its "uprightness" and made a "sinful" animal that crawls on its belly. God's prophecy about the serpent's bruise is an example of Christian typology, where figures and symbols of the Old Testament are taken as prophecies about Jesus and the New Testament. The writer of Genesis may have just meant that humans will dislike snakes (as originally it was a serpent who tempted Eve, not Satan), but in traditional Christian doctrine and typology this curse comes to symbolize Eve's "seed" (Jesus, her eventual descendent) defeating Satan.

God punishes Eve by condemning all women to suffer in childbirth and to submit to their husbands. He punishes Adam by condemning all men to work constantly at farming the unfriendly ground, and then to die and return to the ground, "For dust thou art, and shalt to dust return." The Son then pities the couple in their naked shame, and he clothes them in animal skins before returning to Heaven and his throne.

All the present pain and hardship of the world begins to manifest itself as the result of the Fall. In the natural order Eve was still supposed to submit to Adam, but now fallen men will not be perfect husbands anymore, so it will be harder for fallen women to "submit" to them.

The scene then jumps slightly back in time, as Sin and Death wait at the Hell's gates where Satan left them. Sin suddenly senses that Satan has succeeded in his task, and she convinces Death to come along with her, as he smells "mortal change on earth" and the possibility of much prey to feed his hunger. The two gather up whatever materials they find in Chaos and construct a wide, smooth bridge from Hell to Earth.

Milton has built up all the consequences of the Fall to make the eating of the forbidden fruit seem more grave and portentous than a single disobedient meal. The most ominous result of the Fall is that God now allows the monsters of Sin and Death to enter Earth.

Just as they finish their work Satan greets them at the edge of Paradise, and he is delighted at the bridge they have built. Sin congratulates Satan for his success, encouraging him to take all the credit for the bridge, and she says that she and Death will make this world his. Satan responds by saying he is proud of his children, and he finally accepts the name "Satan" ("Adversary") for himself. He decides to return to Hell to tell his followers the news, but he sends Sin and Death up into Earth in his place, instructing the two to corrupt humans and then kill them.

The bridge from Hell to Earth is based on a New Testament quote about the path to Hell being wide, smooth, and easy to follow. In this way Satan and his devils can now easily tempt the fallen humans down into Hell, while the path to Heaven is much more difficult. Satan is feeling victorious, like he has actually wounded God, so his inner torment is temporarily gone and he rejoices in his role as God's greatest enemy.

Sin and Death enter the mortal universe and immediately begin infecting it, and Satan flies swiftly down to Hell. He arrives at Pandaemonium, where all his followers have been awaiting his return. Satan sits down on his throne and shines with all the brightness he has left in his fallen state. He then addresses the devils and tells them of his triumph, glorifying his own exploits and how he destroyed all humanity "with an apple."

This is a devilish foreshadowing of the Son returning to his throne after his death and resurrection as a man. Satan plays up his own hardships, making himself the hero in his own narrative. He also emphasizes the great irony of the fall and Milton's need to "justify" God, as God has basically ruined all of humanity for a single apple.

Satan ends his speech by telling his followers to fly up to Earth and "enter now into full bliss." He expects to hear applause after this, but instead hears only hissing, "the sound / Of public scorn," and he sees that all the devils have been suddenly transformed into serpents. Satan himself is turned into a huge serpent as well, a dragon, and he realizes that he is being "punished in the shape he sinned," according to the doom the Son had delivered to the earthly serpent.

Satan had felt victorious in escaping God's punishment, as the Son seemed to punish the serpent instead of Satan himself, but Satan now shares in the humiliation of the snake he possessed. This punishment is an example of the concept of "contrapasso," where one's punishment ironically echoes one's crime. Contrapasso is often used in the Hell of Dante's "Inferno." Satan ends his transformations in his lowest, most bestial form, as a snake instead of a dark god.

A grove of trees then sprouts up in Hell, filled with fruit like the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, but whenever the hungry, thirsty snakes try to bite it the fruit turns to ash. Later the devils are allowed to return to their usual forms, but every year in the future God punishes them this way.

The contrapasso is extended as the devils are punished in the same way as Satan sinned (by tempting Eve). Their punishment is also a continual frustration of desire, as they continue to refuse to repent. Their punishment echoes that of the mythical Greek Tantalus, who was condemned to be "tantalized" by fruit and water just out of his reach.

Meanwhile Sin and Death arrive on Earth. Death says that all places are alike for him, as he experiences only ravenous hunger, but he is pleased at the bounty of life on Earth. Sin instructs him to feast on the plants, the animals, and then on humans after she has corrupted them. God watches the two from Heaven and laments to his angels how they are ruining his wondrous creation. He declares that he allowed them to enter Earth, and he will permit them to stay until Judgment Day, when the victorious Son will cast them back into Hell with the other devils.

Book 9 was the poem's climax, and now Milton draws out the resolution to that climax – the many horrible results of the Fall. As usual nothing happens without God's permission, even the destruction of his beautiful, perfect world. Milton is trying to justify the current state of human life as part of an all-powerful God's plan, so this involves God allowing an extravagant punishment for Adam and Eve's sin.

The angels sing praises about God's justice, and then God sends them down from Heaven to alter the universe. They either tilt the Earth's axis or alter the sun's position (Milton doesn't say which) so that the temperatures on Earth grow more extreme and uncomfortable, and they create storms, strong winds, and ice. Then Discord, the daughter of Sin, arrives and causes all the animals to be at war with each other and with humans as well.

Everything Milton had changed to be better in the unfallen Paradise must now be altered to reflect the current state of nature. God reconfigures his order to reflect the new disobedience of humans. Internal morality affects the physical world just as Satan's disobedience weakened him.

On Earth Adam notices these changes and grows miserable. He now knows that his children will all suffer because of his sin, and he wishes that he could bear all the punishment himself. He doesn't understand God's sense of justice, that he should punish the whole universe and all future humans for one man's disobedience. Adam wishes he could just be punished by being unmade and returning to dust, instead of living with years of suffering. He wonders if God's wrath will be infinite, and he longs for Death to come for him.

Adam's complaints about the extent of his punishment seem justified, but he has not yet been comforted by the knowledge of the future Messiah. After blaming each other in anger, Adam and Eve now come dangerously close to despair, Satan's sin that keeps him even from repenting.

Eve approaches and tries to comfort Adam, but he grows angry with her and calls her "thou serpent," wishing she had never been created, as she is "Crooked by nature" like the rib she was made from. Eve weeps and falls at Adam's feet, begging him for forgiveness and pleading him not to leave her. She reminds him that she too was deceived by the serpent, but then she accepts the full blame for disobeying both God and Adam and wishes that God would place all the punishment on her.

Adam's natural superiority turns to misogyny after the Fall, as he invents several cruel epithets for Eve and women in general. Instead of lashing out in anger, Eve now breaks down and begs forgiveness, accepting all the blame. This is the difference between the humans and the devils, and why God will be merciful to Adam and Eve.

Adam is moved by Eve's distress and loses his anger. He says that if she cannot even bear this small portion of the punishment she has, then Eve shouldn't wish for the full brunt of God's wrath. Adam decides that they should stop blaming each other, but try to lessen their misery by loving each other. Eve responds by suggesting that they kill themselves so as to avoid passing on their curse to their offspring, and "Destruction with destruction to destroy."

Suicide seems like a reasonable option to Eve, but Milton clearly disapproves of it as the path of despair, akin to Satan willingly leaping into the abyss instead of facing the Son's wrath. Suicide is a major sin in traditional Christianity and it offers no escape from God, as the human soul is eternal and can still be punished beyond death.

Adam warns Eve about the dangers of despairing, and that God will not allow her to escape punishment even by killing herself. He reminds Eve of the Son's promise that their "seed shall bruise / The serpent's head," and decides to take this in a metaphorical sense – that one of Eve's offspring will defeat Satan. Therefore if Eve kills herself, Satan will escape his punishment.

Adam prefigures Christian typology by looking for far-reaching metaphors in the Son's cryptic words. Adam rightfully argues against despair, as he now knows that no action of theirs could foil God's plan, if God truly intends to punish Adam and Eve's offspring and Satan.

Adam decides to take comfort in the fact that they will not die immediately, and that their punishment – pain in childbirth, and hard labor for food – isn't actually that bad. He then suggests that they return to the place where they were punished and ask God for forgiveness and grace. Eve agrees, and the two fall on their knees, weeping and confessing their sins.

This is the crucial decision that separates Adam and Eve from Satan. They choose to keep up hope in the future and submit to God's judgment, confessing their sins and asking for forgiveness. Because of this God will be merciful to humanity, while Satan's punishment is eternal.

BOOK 11

God hears Adam and Eve's prayers, which were themselves inspired by his grace. The Son intercedes on the pair's behalf and asks God to have mercy on them. Again the Son volunteers to die for humanity's sake. God agrees, but he says that Adam and Eve can no longer live in Paradise, as they are now impure and Eden is still perfect. God then summons his angels and tells them about the Fall of Man, but also that Adam and Eve have been repenting. He sends Michael to lead Adam and Eve out of Paradise, in case they should eat the fruit of the Tree of Life and live forever.

God gives more of an explanation here for his sometimes inscrutable punishment of the Fall. Paradise is still pure and innocent, and for the impure couple to remain there would be improper and against God's order. Milton barely mentions God's fear that Adam and Eve will eat the Tree of Life and live forever, as this seems like the fear of a less than omnipotent Old Testament God.

God commands Michael to be firm with Adam and Eve, but also kind, and to show Adam a vision of what will occur in humanity's future so as to lessen his despair. God also says to set up a Cherubic guard at Eden's gates so that no human or spirit can enter again. Michael immediately descends to Earth with some four-faced Cherubim.

Milton sets up the visions of the future that Michael will show to Adam. These are Milton's invention, and will allow him to include the whole sweep of (Christian) human history in his poem. God wants to preserve Adam from Satan's despair, so he decides to show him the hopeful future.

Adam and Eve finish their prayers, and Adam anticipates that God will hear them and be merciful. Again he reminds Eve of the prophecy about bruising the serpent's head, saying that she will have revenge on Satan by being the "Mother of all things living," and so the ancestor of the one who will defeat Satan. Eve feels she doesn't deserve this illustrious role, and she still feels ashamed for bringing Death into the world. But she resolves to never leave Adam's side again, and to try and obey him and God from now on, that they might live peacefully in Paradise.

Adam seems to already sense that God's anger is lessening and he will be merciful, even though nothing concrete has happened yet. Though they are fallen now, the couple still acts in a loving, worshipful way compared to most of their offspring. By rejecting their despair and avoiding suicide, Adam and Eve hope to have revenge on Satan and give birth to the one who will someday defeat him.

Adam sees an omen of a hawk chasing two brightly-colored birds, and then he sees Michael descending in the west. He warns Eve to expect new laws or decrees, but that she should "retire" as the approaching angel is a "great Potentate / Or of the Thrones above," more powerful and majestic than Raphael was. Eve obeys and then Michael arrives, dressed in heavenly armor.

Adam's language vaguely echoes Satan's as Satan prepared for rebellion, scorning the Son's "new decrees." Adam, however, is resolved to submit to whatever judgment God will hand down. Michael is much higher-ranked, brighter, and more fearsome than Raphael, showing how the relationship between men and angels has changed and grown distant.

Michael tells Adam that he will be allowed to live many years before Death takes him, but that he and Eve must leave Paradise immediately. Adam is upset, and Eve overhears this and laments the loss of their beautiful home. Michael comforts them, but Adam knows he must obey God's command.

The loss of their home seems to strike Adam and Eve especially hard, as they are almost more upset to lose Eden than to be infected with Sin and Death.

Adam laments that he will never be able to speak with God again, and that if he had been allowed to remain in Paradise he would have erected altars at all the places he had heard God's voice. Michael warns him about giving too much value to location in worship, as God is everywhere. He says that Adam will be able to speak to God wherever he is, not just in Eden.

Michael warns Adam with Milton's voice, as part of the ritual and tradition Milton criticized among many Christians was their devotion to a place of worship. Milton felt that personal, individual worship of God was more important than gathering together in ornate churches and cathedrals.

Michael then puts Eve into an enchanted sleep and leads Adam up to a high hill to show him a vision of his descendants' future. This is the highest hill in Paradise, and from it Adam can see almost a whole hemisphere of the Earth – Milton compares it to the hill where Satan will tempt Jesus by offering him all of Earth's kingdoms. Michael drops water from the Well of Life into Adam's eyes, and then shows him the vision of the future, and the results of his crime.

This scene echoes one from the New Testament, where Satan will tempt Jesus to give up his divine mission and instead accept dominion of all the kingdoms of humanity. Michael does not lead Adam to this mountain to tempt him, but the visions will be a test of Adam's courage, despair, and hope. Milton begins to expand his epic into the future.

First Adam sees two men offering sacrifices to God, and when one is accepted by God and the other not, the second man kills the first with a stone. Adam is horrified by this, and Michael explains that the two men are brothers, Cain and Abel, the first sons Eve will give birth to. Adam is shocked by his first sight of death, and Michael explains all the other ways death will come to humans – disease, natural disaster, war, and old age. He then shows Adam a vision of a hospital filled with people dying of various horrible diseases.

This sequence of visions will oscillate between despair at humanity's sin and hope in its potential for goodness. Adam is first shocked by all the horrors of the world, which indeed seem to unfairly outweigh the sin being punished. Milton "justifies" God by blaming death on Death himself, instead of God's specific punishment. Cain's murder of Abel is the first time Death takes a man.

Adam weeps at this sight and wonders why people do not immediately kill themselves so as to avoid such suffering. Michael reminds Adam that this is all punishment for his sin, and Adam asks if there is any alternative to death. Michael says that by living temperately and virtuously people might avoid disease and live a long time, so that they die peacefully of old age. Adam then resolves to live well until Heaven decrees that he should die.

In these visions Milton is able to touch on wide and various subjects, such as the best way a Christian should live in terms of eating and drinking. Michael mixes the depressing visions with hopeful advice and encouragement so Adam does not despair.

Michael shows Adam a vision of men playing music and forging tools, and then some finely dressed women appear and tempt the men from their work. They begin to feast, dance, and have sex. Adam assumes this is a vision of happiness, but Michael warns him that these people are just as sinful as the murderers earlier. They have forgotten God and live only for pleasure, the women forgetting their domestic duties and the men allowing themselves to give in to the lustful women. They too will die, Michael warns, and Adam laments again.

The misogyny that began after the Fall continues here, as women are portrayed as agents of sin and temptation – the men are trying to be virtuous and godly until they are corrupted by the lustful women. In portraying the world after the Fall Milton can now ascribe to more traditional Puritan values, which consider idleness, sex, and vain riches as sinful.

Michael then shows Adam visions of towns and cities, and of great armies doing battle, killing thousands of men and destroying cities. There is one man who speaks out against all this violence, and a cloud lifts him up to Heaven before the other angry men can attack him. Adam weeps again and asks Michael why all this violence should happen, multiplying the original murder he saw.

This one man is Enoch, one of the few people in history to never die but instead to be taken directly up to Heaven (according to the Old Testament). The pattern of history as Milton portrays it arranges human history by its sins and its righteous prophets, instead of by civilization or technological advancement.

Michael says that these armies are the product of the lustful unions Adam saw in the last vision, and that violent, terrible conquerors will arise who praise war and fame. The man who spoke out against them was Enoch, the only righteous man left in the world, and God took him up to Heaven as a reward. The next vision shows more scenes of dancing and sex, and one man preaching against this evil way of life. The man is ignored, and then he goes off alone and builds an enormous boat.

Enoch is the first of the "one righteous man" motifs that Milton emphasizes throughout Biblical history. In all the stages of history and sinfulness, there is always one righteous man who condemns the sins of the rest of society. He is scorned or even killed by the world, but protected by God. All these figures foreshadow Jesus.

Adam watches as pairs of every animal on earth come to the man's boat and enter it. The man and his family go inside and he shuts the boat, and then a great storm begins and floods the earth. All the other animals and the sinful humans are drowned, until only those in the boat remain. Adam grieves at this vision, seeing the destruction of all his offspring, and he tells Michael that he wished he had remained ignorant of the evil future.

Noah becomes the "one righteous man" of the next generation, and is even more of a Christ-figure than Enoch – Noah is a solitary man whose virtue keeps the human race alive. The pairs of animals reflect the pairs of animals that came to Adam to be named.

Michael describes all the sins of the humans God destroyed in the flood, and tells how God instructed the one righteous man (Noah) to build the ark and preserve mankind. God then flooded the earth and wiped out all other humans. Continuing the vision, Adam sees the waters recede and Noah send out a dove to look for dry land. The ark then settles on a high mountain and a rainbow appears in the sky. Adam rejoices at this sight and the fact that humans will continue through Noah's family. Michael explains that the rainbow is a sign of God's promise to never again destroy the earth with a flood.

Milton doesn't comment on God's extreme justice in destroying the Earth, but the Flood seems to be another example of sin causing physical changes in the world. Adam forgets his horror at the death of almost all living things when he sees the comforting sign of the rainbow. In the same way he (and Milton) will accept the immeasurable suffering caused by the Fall when given the promise of the Son's redemption and victory.

BOOK 12

Michael perceives that Adam's mortal eyes are weary of all these visions, so he decides to verbally relate the rest of his story. After the flood, humanity starts over as a "second stock" from Noah's family. While they still remember their punishment people are more obedient to God than before the flood, and they offer him many sacrifices of livestock and crops.

Mankind basically starts over with a new Adam (Noah), but human nature is still fundamentally corrupted by the Fall. God doesn't change anything about the sinful nature of the Earth except for destroying most of it.

A few generations later, however, a leader arises with arrogant, blasphemous ambition. This man (Nimrod, though Michael doesn't name him) rules as a tyrant and forces his subjects to build a huge tower, hoping to reach Heaven and gain fame. God sees this and disrupts the tower's construction by making all the workers suddenly speak different languages, so they cannot understand each other. This tower will be called the Tower of Babel, and all the angels of Heaven will laugh at the failed ambitions of humans.

Milton defines different chapters of history by sin, and in Nimrod's generation humans fall victim to a monstrous pride. Nimrod's sin is similar to that of Satan, as he actively flaunts his power and threatens God's hierarchy. This vision of Nimrod allows Milton to expound further on his ideas about political and religious freedom.

Adam responds to this tale by condemning the sin of trying to rule over other humans, who should remain free. Only God has rightful dominion, and he gave men to rule only over animals and plants, not each other. Michael agrees, but says that since the Fall humans will only have true freedom when they act with "right reason." They will instead often allow themselves to be enslaved by desire and sinful passions, and so God allows them to be ruled over by cruel tyrants – though tyranny is still a great sin.

Milton opposed the monarchy in England (even at risk to his own life, as when writing Paradise Lost*), and he saw most monarchs as tyrants. God is a monarch, but his rule is part of the proper order and hierarchy, whereas Milton did not think it proper for men to rule over other men. Milton also warns that even "free" humans can be ruled by their sinful natures, so the only way to be truly free is to use one's "right reason" and remain obedient to God, the proper ruler who gives true freedom.*

Michael continues, saying that humans will grow ever more sinful until God turns away from all of them except for one righteous man, Abraham, who obeys God though his family worships idols. God promises to make a great nation out Abraham's offspring, and among them will be the "great Deliverer, who shall bruise / The Serpent's head." Abraham follows God's commandment and leave his home, moving to the Promised Land of Canaan.

Abraham becomes the next "one righteous man" who will father the nation of Israel. It is out of this nation that the Messiah will one day be born. The "Promised Land" of Canaan becomes a metaphor and foreshadowing of the Promised Land of Heaven, to which Jesus will lead the "nation" of all humanity.

Abraham's descendants, the nation of Israel, will later move to Egypt and eventually become enslaved by the Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. God will then choose a righteous pair of brothers (Moses and Aaron) to deliver the Israelites. God will cause plagues to afflict the Egyptian people until the Pharaoh lets the Israelites go, but then the Pharaoh changes his mind and pursues the Israelites with his army. God parts the Red Sea for the Israelites to pass through, and then causes the waters to close around the Pharaoh's army.

Milton remains faithful to the Biblical account of the Exodus, which is another example of people rebelling against an unjust, ungodly tyrant. According to Christian tradition, Moses is the author of the first books of the Old Testament, including Genesis. So, in a strange twist, in seeing Moses, Adam sees the future man who will write the story of Adam himself, and the account Milton will then use for Paradise Lost.

The Israelites will be led by Moses and a senate of twelve tribes, but they must wander through the desert for a long time before returning to Canaan. In the desert Moses ascends to Mount Sinai, where God appears to him and deliver the Ten Commandments. These (and other laws) will exist to inform humans of their sin and foretell of the Messiah to come. The Israelites will keep the tablets of the Ten Commandments in a holy ark.

At the beginning of the poem Milton invoked the Muse that inspired Moses when he was on Sinai. The Ten Commandments were given directly by God, but they were then followed by a long list of complex laws that the Israelites continuously failed to uphold.

There will then be many battles and miracles as the Israelites retake Canaan. Adam interrupts, relieved that God will bless a race of humans after they have been cursed for so long, but he asks Michael how the Israelites will obey the laws God gives them. Michael responds that the Israelites will continue to sin, as "Law can discover sin, but not remove," and God's justice will not be fulfilled until he has a proper sacrifice. The Israelites will sacrifice livestock for their sins, but these are only shadows foretelling the Messiah.

Milton explains this Old Testament story from the traditional Christian perspective – the old laws existed only to point out how sinful humans were, and how incapable they were of goodness without God. The failure to uphold the law required a sacrifice for God's justice to be fulfilled, but there was no proper sacrifice until the Son himself died for all humanity.

Michael explains that Moses will not lead his people into Canaan, but his successor Joshua (also called Jesus) will, and Joshua will prefigure the Jesus to come, who will lead all people into the Promised Land of Heaven. The Israelites will prosper in Canaan until they grow sinful again, and God will strengthen their enemies to attack them. God will send judges to rule the Israelites, and then kings, and among these kings will be one called David. The Messiah will come from David's offspring.

Michael explicitly points out the Old Testament typology that Christian doctrine emphasizes, noting how Joshua even shares Jesus's name (Jesus was called Yeshua or Joshua in Hebrew). Milton now starts skipping more quickly through history. He implies that though tyranny is a great sin, God allows tyrants to exist for the sake of punishing the sinful populace.

David's son (Solomon) will build a great temple of God, but his descendants will then lose it to a conquering nation (Rome). The Messiah will then be born, announced by shepherds, foreign sages, and a choir of angels. He will be born of a virgin mother (Mary), and his father will be God himself. This is the one prophesied to bruise the serpent's head, and to reunite Heaven and Earth.

Michael finally reaches the climax of all this build-up, and the pinnacle of all human history (from a Christian perspective) – the incarnation of the Son. Michael also affirms the metaphorical significance of God's curse to "bruise the serpent's head."

Adam is overjoyed at this news and he asks Michael to describe the Messiah's glorious battle with Satan, but Michael says that they will not fight with violence – instead the Son becomes incarnate as a man and allows himself to suffer and die, receiving all of God's punishment for Adam's sin. The Son will be hated all his life and then killed by being nailed to a cross. After three days, however, the Son will rise from the dead, defeating Satan, Sin, and Death in one great resurrection. He will appear to some of his disciples and then ascend to Heaven.

Instead of another violent, terrible war in Heaven, the Son's ultimate defeat of Satan will involve his love and humility. By "condescending" to become a man and die for the sins of all humans (or, symbolically, Adam's sin that infected all other humans), Jesus will fulfill God's proper justice, defeat the power of Death, and begin to restore humanity to its proper obedience and order.

After the Messiah is gone, his disciples will baptize other nations and teach them of the his sacrifice, and if they accept this grace they will be saved. Then on Judgment Day the Son will return in glory to send the unfaithful to Hell and resurrect the faithful dead, and then Heaven and Earth will be joined into one wondrous Paradise. Adam rejoices at this, "That all this good of evil shall produce, / And evil turn to good," and he almost feels that he should not regret the Fall, as it will bring about such future glory. Adam then worries that the Messiah's followers will be persecuted by the other, sinful humans.

On Judgment Day the Son will return everything to its proper order and hierarchy, but it will be an order that is even better than it was before the Fall, as humans will be elevated to Heaven. Adam's reaction brings up the theory of the "fortunate Fall," which says that though the Fall is evil, God brings great good out of it by using it to show his mercy, power, and love to humans in ways they could not have seen if they had remained perfect. Different critics have debated whether the results of the Fall are so "fortunate" that it was actually a positive thing, but Milton doesn't seem to go this far. He does show that because God exists outside of time, he can include the Fall into his overarching plan for the good of all creation.

Michael confirms that the followers (Christians) will be persecuted, but says that God will send down a "Comforter" (the Holy Spirit) to protect them with spiritual armor and allow them to perform miracles. Michael says that after the faithful original disciples die, however, many corrupt leaders will enter the Church as well, like "grievous wolves" concerned only with earthly riches and fame. They will build opulent temples and indulge in complicated rituals. In this way the good Christians will be always persecuted, while the world will always reward those who do evil – until the Messiah returns again.

Milton now moves into a brief commentary on his own time and the long stretch of human history after Jesus's resurrection, when Christians still wait for Judgment Day. Milton uses Michael's voice to comment on the "wolves" (similar to Satan leaping into Eden) of the paid and corrupted clergy who will often lead Christians astray. The motif of the "one righteous man" has been fulfilled by Christ, but all good Christians will continue to be persecuted.

Adam is amazed at how Michael has described all of human history, and he is unspeakably comforted that peace and reconciliation eventually await his offspring. He resolves to live the rest of his life in obedience to God, and in this way to bring good out of evil even in small ways. Michael says that Adam has thus learned "the sum / Of wisdom," and to not long for any greater knowledge in Heaven or Earth. Though Adam has to leave Paradise, he can still possess a paradise within himself.

Adam is punished for his own crime, but he has now been shown its results throughout the scope of all human history. The result of all this lofty knowledge is that Adam finally learns his lesson – to be content with the knowledge God has decreed, and to live his life in simple obedience to God. Just as Satan carries Hell within him, so Adam can carry Paradise.

Michael and Adam descend from the hilltop and Michael sends Adam to awaken Eve, as she has also had informative, comforting dreams about the Messiah. Adam finds Eve already awake, and she tells him how her dreams have comforted her. Then they see Michael and his Cherubim standing before them, holding a flaming sword to forever guard the gate of Eden. Michael leads Adam and Eve through the gate and they exit Paradise. They cry a few tears and then walk hand in hand into a new world.

After expanding his ambitious epic through millennia, Milton ends the poem at the beginning of Fallen history. Though Adam has received a sort of "predestination" concerning his offspring, he and Eve still have free will concerning their own personal futures, and they have now learned the lesson of the Fall. They again take comfort in their love for each other and they will now try to be more obedient to God, nurturing within themselves the physical Paradise they have lost.

HOW TO CITE

To cite this LitChart:

MLA

Cosby, Matt. "*Paradise Lost*." *LitCharts*. LitCharts LLC, 28 May 2014. Web. 18 Oct 2019.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Cosby, Matt. "*Paradise Lost*." LitCharts LLC, May 28, 2014. Retrieved October 18, 2019. https://www.litcharts.com/lit/paradise-lost.

To cite any of the quotes from *Paradise Lost* covered in the Quotes section of this LitChart:

MLA

Milton, John. Paradise Lost. Penguin Classics. 2003.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Milton, John. Paradise Lost. New York: Penguin Classics. 2003.